

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION

NO. 31

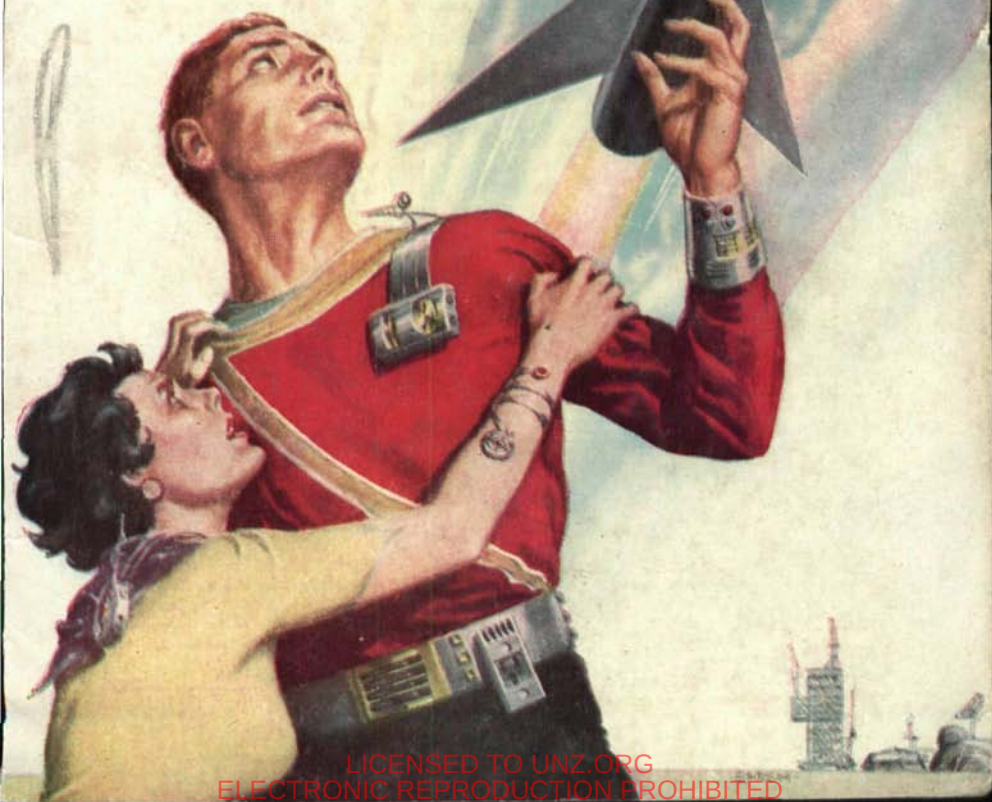
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WORLDS WITHOUT END

by **CLIFFORD D. SIMAK**

THE SMALL ROOM

by **THOMAS N. SCORTIA**



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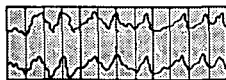
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FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION

● NOVEL

- WORLDS WITHOUT END** *Clifford D. Simak* 4
The Dreams department was supposed to give people the dreams of their choice, to put them into a world of their own. But something was wrong; Dreams clients were not getting what they paid for. And Norman Blaine had to find out the how and why of the mystery, before scandal broke!

● SHORT STORIES

- ONE SMALL ROOM** (symbolized on cover) .*Thomas N. Scortia* 64
At the last moment Rhinneson found a barrier before him...
- YESTERDAY'S HEROES** *Ron Smith* 88
If ever a man had a good chance of getting away with murder, that man was David Malry. The very word had been forgotten...
- THE MAN WITH TALENT** *Robert Silverberg* 103
Yesterday, today, tomorrow—a poet's life is not an easy one!
- BINGO AND BONGO** *Carol Emshwiller* 117
These man-creatures had to be treated kindly—but with firmness.

● FEATURES

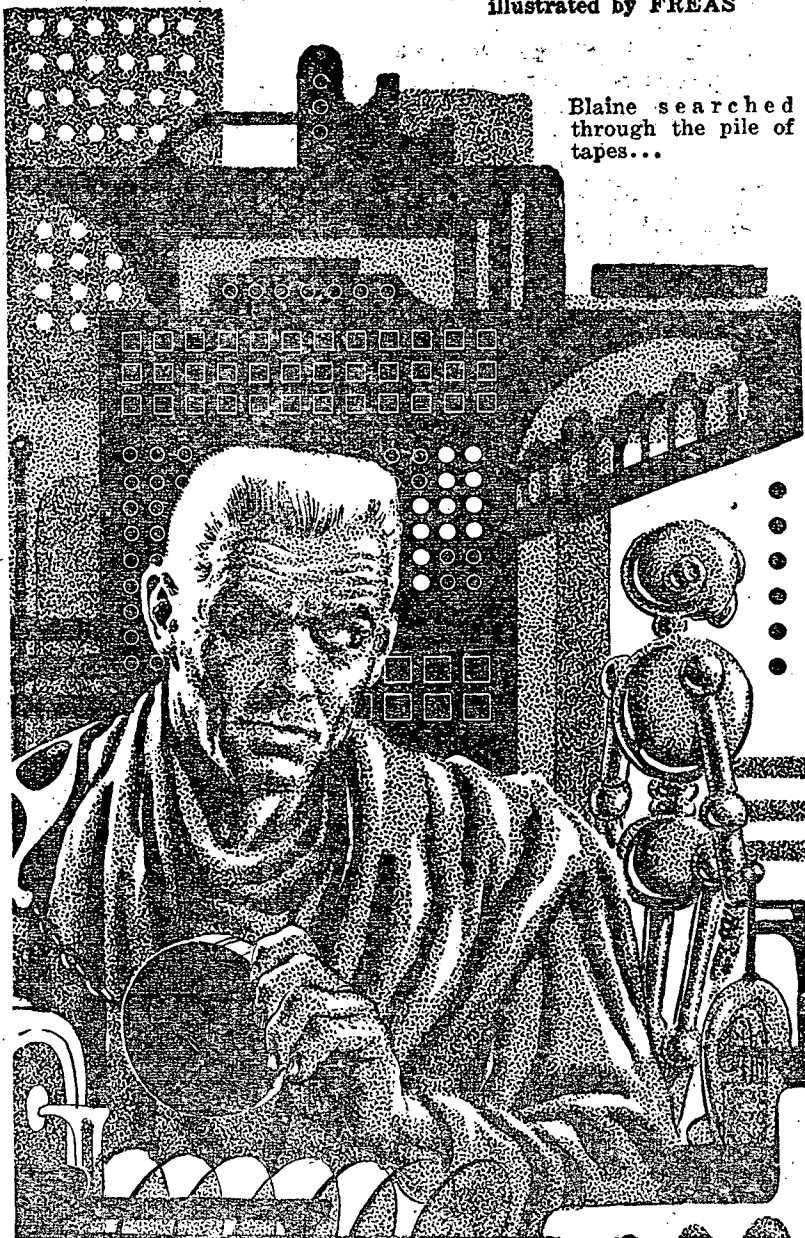
- MAD MEN OF SCIENCE** (article) *L. Sprague de Camp* 76
There have been "mad scientists"—but not quite as you'd think.
- READIN' AND WRITHIN'** *Book Reviews* 95
Damon Knight and Murray King dig into current hardcover offerings.
- DOWN TO EARTH** (department) *The Readers* 125
Letters from authors and readers, plus editorial comment.
- THE EDITOR'S PAGE** *Robert W. Lowndes* 127
Regarding psionic machines, we want to know: "What Works?"

Editor: ROBERT W. LOWNDES DOROTHY B. SEADOR, Asso. Ed.
COVER BY EMSH Illustrations by Emsh, Freas, and Orban

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION, Number 31, Winter 1956-1957. Published quarterly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Application for second class entry pending at the Post Office, Holyoke, Mass. Single copies 35¢; yearly subscription \$1.40. Entire contents copyright 1956 by Columbia Publications, Inc. Printed in U. S. A.

illustrated by FREAS

Blaine searched
through the pile of
tapes...



WORLDS WITHOUT END

Novel by Clifford D. Simak

A number of years ago, John W. Campbell contrived a special designation for a particular kind of story; he dubbed it the "nova" story. A "nova" story was one wherein the basic science fiction ingredients were familiar, having appeared numerous times before, but the treatment was as original as if the idea was entirely new. Where other authors had used the essential elements merely as a backdrop for more or less conventional science fiction adventures, the author of the "nova" story explored potentialities in the fundamental idea that no one had come up with before.

Such is the case with "Worlds Without End". The "dream machine" idea is of venerable vintage; among the early appearances of this theme were Wertenbaker's "Chamber of Life"; and Manning-Pratt's "City of the Living Dead".

Here, then we have tried-and-true elements—with a difference; Clifford D. Simak has shown what kind of use can be made of the "sleepers" setup by the society which constructs and maintains the dreams; and it isn't merely a means of sending social undesirables to the future, either!

SHE DID NOT look like Blaine reflected, one could the kind of person who never tell. would want to take the He wrote the name she had Dream. Although, Norman given him down on the scratch

pad, instead of putting it on the application blank, he wrote it slowly, deliberately, to give himself time to think, for there was something here that was puzzling.

Lucinda Silone.

Peculiar name, he thought. Not like a real name. More like a stage name taken to cover up plain Susan Brown, or ordinary Betty Smith, or some other common run of name.

He wrote it slowly so that he could think, but he couldn't think too well. There were too many other things cluttering up his brain: The shakeup rumor that had whispered its way for days back and forth within the Center, his own connection with that rumor, and the advice that had been given him—there was something funny about the job. The advice was: don't trust Farris (as if he needed that advice!)—look it over well if it is offered you. It was all kindly-meant advice, but not very helpful.

And there was the lapel-clinging Buttonholer who had caught him in the parking lot that morning and had clung onto him when he tried to push him off; there was Harriet Marsh, with whom he had a date this very night.

Now, finally, this woman across the desk from him.

Although it was foolish, Blaine told himself—to think a thing like that, to tie her up

with all the other thoughts that were bumping together like driftwood in his brain. For there could be no connection—there simply couldn't be.

She was Lucinda Silone, she'd said. Something about the name and something, as well, about the way she said it—the little lilting tones—meant consciously to give it grace and make it sparkle—set tiny alarm bells ringing in his brain.

'You're with Entertainment.' He said it casually, very much off-hand; this was a trick question and one that must be rightly put.

"Why, no," she replied, "I'm not."

LISTENING to the way she said it, Blaine could find nothing wrong. Her voice held a touch of fluttery happiness that betrayed pleasure at his thinking she must be Entertainment. And that was just as it should be. It was exactly the way that most of the others answered—flattered at the implication that they belonged to the fabulous Entertainment guild.

He gave her her money's worth. "I would have guessed you were."

He looked directly at Lucinda Silone, watching the expression on her face, but seeing all the other good points, too. "We get good at judging people

here," he said. "We aren't often wrong."

She didn't wince. There was no reaction—no start of guilt, no flutter of confusion.

Her hair was honey color, her eyes were china blue, and her skin so milky white that one looked a second time to make sure that it was real.

We don't get many like this one, thought Blaine. *The old and sick and the disappointed. The desperate ones and those who know frustration.*

"You're mistaken, Mr. Blaine," she said. "I am Education."

He wrote *Education* on the scratch pad, and said, "It may have been the name. It's a very good name. Easy to say. Musical. It would go well on the stage."

He looked up from the pad and said, smiling—making himself smile against the inexplicable tension that was rising in him: "Although it was not the name alone; I am sure of that."

SHE DIDN'T smile and he wondered swiftly if he had been awkward. He snapped the words he'd said in quick review across his mind and decided that he'd not been awkward. When you were director of Fabrication, you were not an awkward man. You knew how to handle people; you had to

know how to handle them. And you knew, as well, how to handle yourself—how to make your face say one thing while your mind might be thinking something else.

No, his words had been a compliment, and not too badly put. She should have smiled. That she had failed to smile might mean something—or it mightn't mean a thing, except that she was clever. Norman Blaine had no doubt that Lucinda Silone was clever, and as cool a customer as he had ever seen.

Although coolness in itself was not too unusual. You got the cool ones, too—the cool and calculating—the ones who had figured it all out well ahead of time and knew what they were doing. And there were others, too, who had cut off all retreat behind them.

"You wish a Sleep," he said. She nodded.

"And a Dream?"

"And a Dream," she said.

"You've thought it out quite thoroughly, I suppose. You wouldn't come, of course, if you had any doubts."

"I've thought it through she told him, "and I have no doubts."

"You still have time. You'll have time to change your mind up to the final moment. We're most anxious that you get that fact fixed firmly in your mind."

"I'll not change my mind," she said.

"We still prefer to assume you may. We do not try to change your mind, but we insist upon complete understanding upon your part that a change is possible. You are under no obligation to us. No matter how far we've gone, there still is no obligation. The Dream may have been fabricated and processed; you may have paid your fee; you may already have entered the receptacle—there's still time to change your mind. The Dream will then be destroyed, your fee will be returned, and the record will be expunged. So far as we are then concerned, we will have never seen you."

"I quite understand," she said.

He nodded quietly. "We'll proceed on that understanding."

HE PICKED UP his pencil and wrote her name and classification on the application blank. "Age?"

"Twenty nine."

"Married?"

"No."

"Children?"

"None."

"Nearest of kin?"

"An aunt."

"Name?"

She gave him the name and he wrote it down, with address,

age and classification of the aunt.

"Any others?"

"None at all."

"Your parents?"

Her parents had been dead for years, she said; she was an only child. She gave her parents' names, their classifications, their ages at the time of death, their last place of residence, their place of burial.

"You'll check on all of this?" she asked.

"We check on everything."

HERE WAS the place where most of the applicants—even those who had nothing in their life to hide—would show some nervousness, would frantically start checking back along their memories to unearth some possible, long-forgotten incident which might turn up in the course of investigation to embarrass or impede them.

Lucinda Silone was not nervous; she sat there, waiting for the other questions.

Norman Blaine asked them: The number of her guild, her card number, her immediate superior, last medical exam, physical or psychic defects or ailments—all the other trivia which went into the details of daily life.

Finally he was finished and laid the pencil down. "Still no doubts?"

She shook her head.

"I keep harking back to that," said Blaine, "to make absolutely certain we have a willing client; otherwise we have no legal status. But aside from that, there is the matter of ethics . . ."

"I understand," she said, "that you are very ethical."

It might have been mockery; if so, it was very clever mockery. He tried to decide if it were or not, but he wasn't sure.

He let it drop. "We have to be," he told her. "Here is a set-up which, to survive, must be based on the highest code of ethics. You give your body into our hands for our safekeeping over a number of years. What is more, you give your mind over to us, to a lesser extent. We gain much intimate knowledge of your life in the course of our work with you. To continue in the job we're doing, we must enjoy the complete confidence not only of our clients, but of the general public. The slightest breath of scandal . . ."

"There has never been a scandal?"

"In the early days, there were a few. They've been forgotten now, or we hope they have. It was those early scandals which made our guild realize how important it was that we keep ourselves free of any professional taint. A scandal in any of the other guilds is no more than a legal matter



Lucinda Silone wanted an idyllic dream world...

which can be adjudicated in the courts and then forgiven and forgotten. But with us there'd be no forgiving or forgetting; we'd never live it down."

SITTING THERE, Norman Blaine thought of his pride in the work he did—a bright and shining pride, a comfortable and contented pride in a job well done. And this feeling was not confined to he himself alone, but was held by everyone at Center. They might be flippant when they talked among themselves; but the pride was there, hidden deep beneath the flippancy and the workaday approach.

"You almost sound," she said, "like a dedicated people."

Mockery again, he wondered. Or was it flattery to match his own? He smiled a little at it. "Not dedicated," he said. "At least, we never think of ourselves as dedicated."

And that was not quite right, he knew, for there were times when every one of them must have thought of themselves as dedicated. It was not a thing, of course, that one could say aloud—but the thought was there.

It was a strange situation, he thought—the pride of work, the fierce loyalty to the guild itself, and, then, the cutthroat competition, and the vicious Center politics which existed in

the midst of that pride and loyalty.

Take Roemer for example. John Roemer, after year of work, was on his way out. That had been the talk for days—the open secret which had been whispered through the Center. Farris had something to do with it, Lew Giesey was involved in some way, and there were others who were mentioned. Blaine himself, for example, had been mentioned as one of the men who might be chosen to step up into Roemer's position. Thank goodness, he had steered clear of Center politics all these years. There was too much headache in Center politics. Norman Blaine's work had been enough for him.

Although it would be fine, he thought, if he were picked to take over Roemer's job. It was higher up the ladder; the pay was better; and maybe if he got more money he could talk Harriet into giving up her newspaper job and . . .

HE PULLED himself back to the job at hand.

"There are certain considerations which you should take into account," he told the woman across the desk. "You should realize all the implications of what your decision means before you go ahead. You must realize that once you

go to sleep, you will awaken in a culture different than your own. The planets will not stand still while you sleep; they will advance—or at least we hope they will. Much will be different. Styles will change, in clothing and in manners. Thought and speech and perspective—all will change. You will awaken an alien in a world that has left you far behind; you will be old fashioned.

There will be public issues of which there now is not the faintest inkling. Governments may have evolved, and customs will be different. What is illegal today may have become quite acceptable; what is acceptable and legal today may have become outrageous or illegal then. Your friends will all be dead ...”

“I have no friends,” Lucinda Silone said.

He disregarded her and went on: “What I am trying to impress upon you is that once you wake you cannot step from here straight back into the world, for it will be your world no longer. Your world will have died many years before; you will have to be readjusted, will have to take a course in re-orientation. In certain instances, depending upon the awakened person to some extent, to the cultural changes to an even greater extent, this matter of reorientation may take quite some time. For we

must give you not only the facts of the changes which have occurred while you were asleep—we must gain your acceptance of those changes. Until you have readjusted not only your data, but your culture as well, we cannot let you go. To live a normal life in that world in which you wake you must accept it as if you had been born into it—you must become, in fact, part of it. And that must often be a long and painful process.”

“I realize all that,” she said; “I’m ready to abide by all the conditions you lay down.”

SHE HAD NOT hesitated once. Lucinda Silone had shown no regret or nervousness. She was as cool and calm as when she’d walked into the office.

“Now,” Blaine said, “the reason.”

“The reason?”

“The reason why you wish to take the Sleep; we must know.”

“You’ll investigate that, too?”

“We shall; we must be sure, you see. There are many reasons—many more than you’d think there’d be.”

He kept on talking, to give her a chance to steel herself and tell him the reason. More often than not this was the hardest thing of all that a client faced. “There are those,” he

said, "who take the Sleep because they have a disease which at the moment is incurable. They do not contract for a Sleep of any specified length, but only till the day when a cure has been discovered.

"Then there are those who wish to wait out the time against the return of a loved one, who is traveling to the stars—waiting out on Earth the subjective time of the faster-than-light flights. And there are those who wish to sleep out an investment which they are sure, given time, will make them a fortune. Usually we try to talk them out of it; we call in our economists, who try to show them . . ."

She interrupted him. "Would ennui be enough?" she asked. "Just simple ennui?"

He wrote *ennui* for the reason and shoved the application to one side. "You can sign it later."

"I can sign it now."

"We'd prefer you wait a little."

BLAINE fiddled with the pencil, trying to think it out—wondering why this client should disturb him so. Lucinda Silone was wrong and he couldn't place the wrongness; yet, he knew he should be able to, for he met all sorts of clients.

"If you wish," he said, "we could discuss the Dream.

Usually we don't but . . ."

"Let's discuss it," she said.

"A Dream is not necessary," he told her. "There are those who take the Sleep without one. I don't wish to appear to be arguing against a Dream; in many cases it appears to me to be preferable. You would not be conscious of the time—an hour or a century is no longer than a second. You go to sleep; then you wake, and it is as if there had been no time at all . . ."

"I want a Dream," she said.

"In that case, we are glad to serve you. Have you thought what kind?"

"A friendly dream. A restful one and friendly."

"No excitement? No adventure?"

"Some; perhaps, it might get monotonous otherwise. But genteel, if you please."

"A polite society, perhaps," suggested Blaine. "Let's say, one much concerned with manners."

"And no competition, if you can manage it; no rushing about to beat out someone else."

"An old, established home," continued Blaine. "Good position in the community, high family traditions; sufficient income to banish money worries."

"It sounds a bit archaic."

"It's the kind of Dream you asked for."

"Of course," she said. "What am I thinking of? It will be lovely. It's the sort of thing, the sort . . ." she laughed. "The sort of thing you dream of."

HE LAUGHED with her. "You like it? We can change it, bring it up to date."

"Don't you dare, it's just what I want."

"You'll want to be young, I suppose, younger than twenty-nine — sixteen or seventeen."

She nodded.

"And pretty, of course, you would be beautiful despite anything we did."

She did not answer.

"Plenty of admirers," he said. "We could put in lots of them."

She nodded.

"Sexual adventures?"

"A few, don't overdo it, though."

"We'll keep it dignified," he promised. "You'll have no regrets; we'll give you a Dream you'll need not be ashamed of — one you can look back upon with a lot of happiness. There naturally will have to be some disappointments, a few heart-aches; happiness can't run on forever without getting stale. There must be something, even in a Dream, upon which you can establish comparative values."

"I'll leave that all to you."

"All right, then, we'll get to work on it. Could you come

back, say in three days' time? We'll have it roughed out then and we can go over it together. It may take half a dozen — well, let us call them fittings, before we have what you want."

Lucinda Silone rose and held out her hand. Her clasp was firm and friendly. "I'll stop at the cashier's and pay the fee," she said. "And thanks; so very much."

"There's no need to pay the fee this soon."

"I'll feel better when I do."

NORMAN BLAINE watched her go, then sat back down again. The intercom buzzed. "Yes, Irma."

His secretary said, "Harriet called. You were with the client, and couldn't be disturbed; she left a message."

"What did she want?"

"Just to let you know she can't have dinner with you tonight. She said something about an assignment, some big bug from Centauri."

He said: "Irma, let me give you a tip. Never fall in love with Communications. You can't depend on them."

"You keep forgetting, Mr. Blaine; I married Transportation."

"So I do," said Blaine.

"George and Herb are out here waiting. They've been slapping one another on the back and rolling on the floor.

Take them off my hands before I go stark raving."

"Send them in," he said.

"Are they all right?"

"George and Herb?"

"Who else?"

"Certainly, Irma; it's just the way they work."

"It's a comfort to know that," she said, "I'll shoo them in."

HE SETTLED back and watched the two come in. They sprawled themselves in chairs.

George shied a folder at him. "The Jenkins Dream; we got it all worked out."

"He's the jerk who wants to hunt big game," said Herb; we cooked up some dillies for him."

"We made it authentic," George declared with pride; we didn't skip a thing. We put him in the jungle, and we put in mud and insects and the heat; we crammed the place with ravenous nightmares. There's something thirsting for his blood behind every bush."

"It's no hunt," said Herb; it's a running battle. When he isn't scared, he's jumpy. Damned if I can figure out a guy like that."

"It takes all kinds," said Blaine.

"Sure; and we get them all."

"Some day," Blaine told them drily, "you guys will lay

it on so thick you'll get booted to Conditioning."

"They can't do that," said Herb. "You got to have a medical degree to get into Conditioning. And George and me, we couldn't bandage a finger the way it should be done."

George shrugged. "We haven't a thing to worry about; Myrt takes care of that. When we go too hog wild, she tames it down."

Blaine laid the folder to one side. "I'll feed it in before I leave tonight." He picked up the pad. "I have something different here. You'll have to slick down your hair and get on good behavior before I turn you loose on it."

"The one who just went out?"

Blaine nodded.

"I could cook up a Dream for her," said Herb.

SHE WANTS peace and dignity," Blaine informed them. "Genteel society. A sort of modern version of mid-nineteenth century Old Plantation days. No rough stuff; Just magnolia and white columns; horses in the bluegrass."

"Likker," said Herb. "Oceans of likker. Bourbon and mint leaves and..."

"Cocktails," Blaine told him, "and not too many of them."

"Fried chicken," said George, getting into the act. "Water-



Jenkins wanted a big-game hunter's dream world...

melon. Moonlight. River boats. Lemme at it."

"Not so fast; you have the wrong approach. Slow and easy. Tame down. Imagine slow music. A sort of eternal waltz."

"We could put in a war," said Herb; "they fought polite in those days. Sabers and all dressed up in fancy uniforms."

"She doesn't want a war."

"You gotta have some action."

"No action — or very little of it. No worry; no competition. Gentility . . ."

"And us," lamented George, "all spattered up with jungle mud."

The intercom buzzed. "The b.a. wants to see you," Irma said.

"O.K., tell him . . ."

"He wants to see you now."

"Oh, oh," said George.

"I always liked you, Norm," said Herb.

"All right," said Blaine. "Tell him I'll be right up."

"After all these years," Herb said, sadly. "Cutting throats and stabbing backs to get ahead and now it comes to this."

George drew his forefinger across his throat and made a hissing sound, like a blade slashing into flesh.

They were very funny.

II

LEW GIESEY was the business agent of the Dream guild. For years he had run it with an iron fist and disarming smile. He was loyal and he demanded loyalty; he dealt out sharp, decisive discipline as quickly as he rewarded praise.

He worked in an ornate office, but behind a battered desk to which he clung stubbornly, despite all efforts to provide him with a better one. To him, the desk must have been a symbol — or a reminder — of the bitter struggle to attain his station. He had started with that desk in the early days; it had followed him from office to office as he fought his bare-knuckled way ahead, up the table of organization to the

very top. The desk was scarred and battered, unlike the man himself. It was almost as if the desk, in the course of years, might have intervened itself to take the blows aimed at the man behind it.

But there had been one blow which it could not take for him. For Lou Giesey sat in his chair behind the desk and he was quite dead. His head had fallen forward on his chest and his forearms still rested on the chair's arms and his hands still clutched the wood.

The room was at utter peace and so, it seemed as well, the man behind the desk. There was a quietness in the room, as if respite had come from all the years of struggle and of planning. It rested now with a sense of urgency, as if it might have known that the respite could not last for long. In a little while, another man would come and sit behind the desk — perhaps a different one, for no other man would want Giesey's battered desk — and the struggle and the turmoil would start up again.

NORMAN BLAINE stopped when he was halfway between the door and desk; it was the quietness of the room, as well as the head sunk upon the chest, that told him what had happened.

He stopped and listened to

the soft whirring of the clock upon the wall, a sound usually lost until this moment in this place. He heard the almost-inaudible flutter of a typewriter from across the hall, the far-off, muffled rumble of wheels rushing along the highway that ran past the Center.

He thought, with one edge of his mind: *Death and peace and quiet, the three of them together, companions hand in hand.* Then his mind recoiled upon itself and built up into a tight coil spring of horror.

Blaine took a slow step forward, then another one, walking across the carpeting that allowed no footfall sound. He had not as yet realized the full impact of what had happened there — that moments before the business agent had asked to speak to him; that he was the one to find Giesey dead; that his presence in the office might lead to suspicion of him.

He reached the desk and the him, on one corner of the desk. phone was there in front of He lifted the receiver and when the switchboard voice came, he said: "Protection, please."

He heard the clicking as the signal was set up. "Protection."
"Farris, please."

BLAINÉ started to shake, then — the muscles in his forearm jumping, others twitch-

ing in his face. He felt breathlessness rising in him, his chest constricting, a choking in his throat, and his mouth suddenly dry and sticky. He gritted his teeth and stopped the jumping muscles.

"Farris speaking."

"Blaine. Fabrication."

"Oh, yes, Blaine. What can I do for you?"

"Giesey called me up to see him; when I got here he was dead."

There was a pause — not too long a pause. Then: "You're sure he's dead?"

"I haven't touched him. He's sitting in his chair; he looks dead to me."

"Anyone else know?"

"No one. Darrell is out in the reception room, but . . ."

"You didn't yell out that he was dead."

"Not a word; I picked up the phone and called you."

"Good boy! That's using your head. Stay right there; don't tell anyone, don't let anyone in; don't touch anything. We're on our way."

The connection clicked and Norman Blaine put the receiver back into the cradle.

The room was still at rest, squeezing out of the next few moments all the rest it could. Soon the fury would take up again; Paul Farris and his goons would come bursting in.

BLAINE stood by the corner of the desk, uncertainly — waiting, too. And now that he had the time to think, now that the shock had partially worn away and the acceptance of the fact began to seep into his mind, new ideas came creeping in to plague him.

He had found Giesey dead, but would they believe that Blaine had found him dead? Would they ask Blaine how he could prove that he had found Lew Giesey dead?

What did he want to see you for? they'd ask. How often had Giesey called you in before? Do you have any idea why he called you in this time?

Praise? Reprimand? Caution? Discussion of new techniques? Trouble in your department, maybe? Some deviation in your work. How's your private life? Some indiscretion that you had committed?

He sweated, thinking of the questions.

For Farris was thorough. You had to be thorough and unrelenting — and tough — to head up Protection. You were hated from the start, and fear was a necessary factor to counteract the hatred.

Protection was necessary. The guild was an unwieldy organization for all its tight efficiency, and it must be kept in line. Intrigue must be rooted out. Deviationism — dicker-

ing with other unions — must be run down and have an end put to it. There must be no wavering in the loyalty of any members; and to effect all this, there was need of an iron hand.

Blaine reached out to clutch at the desk, then remembered that Farris had told him not to touch a thing.

He pulled his hand back, let it hang by his side, and that seemed awkward and unnatural. He put it in his pocket, and that seemed awkward, too. He put both his hands behind his back and clasped them, then teetered back and forth.

He fidgeted.

He swung around to look at Giesey, wondering if the head still rested on the chest, if the hands still gripped the chair arms. For a moment, Norman Blaine built up in his mind the little speculative fiction that Lew Giesey would not be dead at all, but would have raised his head and be looking at him. And if that were so, Blaine wondered how he would explain.

He needn't have wondered; Giesey still was dead.

AND NOW, for the first time, Norman Blaine began to see the man in relation to the room — not as a single point of interest, but as a man who sat in a chair, with the chair resting on the carpeting

and the carpeting covering the floor.

Giesey's uncapped pen lay upon the desk in front of him, resting where it had stopped after rolling off a sheaf of papers. Giesey's spectacles lay beside the pen; off to one side was a glass with a little water left in the bottom of it; beside it stood the stopper of the carafe from which Giesey must recently have poured himself a drink.

And on the floor, beside Lew Giesey's feet, was a single sheet of paper.

Blaine stood there, staring at the paper, wondering what it was. It was a form of some sort, he could see, and there was writing on it. He edged around the desk to get a better look at it, egged on by an illogical curiosity.

He bent low to read the writing, and a name came up and struck him in the face. *Norman Blaine!*

He bent swiftly and scooped the paper off the carpet. It was an appointment form, dated the day before yesterday and it appointed Norman Blaine as Administrator of Records, Dream Department, effective as of midnight of this day. It was dully signed and stamped as having been recorded.

John Roemer's job, Blaine thought, the job that they had

whispered about for weeks throughout the Center.

HE HAD a fleeting moment of triumph. They'd picked him. He had been the man for the job! But there was more than triumph. He not only had the job, but he had the answers to the questions they would ask.

Why were you called in? they'd ask. Now he could answer them. With this paper in his pocket, he would have the answer.

But he didn't have much time.

He laid the paper on the desk and folded it one third over, forcing himself to take the time to do it neatly. Then, just as neatly, he folded the other one third over and thrust it in his pocket. Then he turned again to face the door and waited.

The next moment, Paul Faris and a half dozen of his goons came stamping in.

III

FARRIS WAS a smooth operator. He was a top-notch policeman and had the advantage of looking like a college instructor. He was not a big man; he wore his hair slicked down, and his eyes were weak and wavery back of the spectacles.

He settled himself comfortably in the chair behind his desk and laced his hands over his belly. "I'll have to ask you some questions," he told Blaine. "Just for the record, naturally. The death is an open-and-shut one of suicide. Poison. We won't know what kind until Doc gets the test run through."

"I understand," said Blaine.

And thought: *I understand, all right. I know just how you work. Lull a man to sleep, then belt him in the guts.*

"You and I have worked together for a long time," said Farris. "Not together, exactly, but under the same roof and for the same purpose. We've got along fine; I know that we will continue in exactly the same way."

"Why, certainly," said Blaine.

"This appointment form," said Farris; "you say you got it in an inter-office envelope."

Blaine nodded. "It was in my basket this morning, I suppose. I didn't get around to going through the stuff until rather late."

Which was true enough, he hadn't gone through the basket until 10 o'clock or so. And another thing — there was no record of inter-office mail.

And still another thing: Maintenance came around and emptied the waste baskets at precisely 11:30; it was now a quarter of one, and anything

that had been in his basket had long since been burned.

"And you just put the form in your pocket and forgot about it?"

"I didn't forget about it; I had an applicant about that time. Then, when the applicant left, two of the fabricators came in. I was going over a point or two with them when Giesey called and asked me to come up."

Farris nodded. "You think he wanted to talk with you about your new position?"

"That was what I thought."

"Had he talked about it before? Did you know that it was coming?"

Norman Blaine shook his head. "It was a complete surprise."

"A happy one, of course?"

"Naturally. It's a better job. Better pay. A man wants to get ahead."

FARRIS looked thoughtful. "Didn't it strike you as a rather strange procedure to get an appointment — particularly to a key position — in an inter-office envelope?"

"Of course it did; I wondered about it at the time."

"But you did nothing about it?"

"I have told you," Blaine said, "I was busy. And what would you suggest that I should have done?"

"Nothing," Farris told him.

"That is what I thought," said Blaine. He thought: *Make something out of it, if you can.*

He felt a brief elation and fought it down. It was too soon, he knew.

At the moment there wasn't a thing that Farris could do—not a single thing. The appointment was in order, properly signed and executed. As of the coming midnight he, Norman Blaine, would be administrator of records, taking over from Roemer. Only the delivery of the appointment was not in order, but there was no way in the world that Farris could prove that Blaine had not received it in the inter-office mail.

He wondered, briefly, what might have happened if Giesey had not died. Would the appointment have come through, or would it have been quashed somewhere along the line? Would some pressure have been brought to bear to give the position to someone else?

FARRIS WAS saying, "I knew the change was going to be made. Roemer was getting — well, just a little difficult. It had come to my attention, and I spoke to Giesey about it. So had several others. We talked about it some; he mentioned you as among several men who could be trusted, but that was all he said."

"You didn't know he had decided?"

Farris shook his head. "No, but I'm glad he picked you for the post. You're the kind of man I like to work with, realistic. We'll get along. We'd better talk about it."

"Any time," said Blaine.

"If you have the time, how about dropping in on me tonight? Any time at all, I'll be home all evening. You know where I live?"

Blaine nodded and got to his feet.

"Don't worry about this business," Farris said. "Lew Giesey was a good man, but there are other good men. We all thought a lot of him. I know it must have been a shock, walking in on him that way."

He hesitated for a moment, then: "And don't worry about any change in your appointment. I'll speak to whomever replaces Giesey."

"Any idea who it'll be?"

Farris' eyelids flicked just once, then his eyes were hard and steady, wavery no longer. "No idea," he said, brusquely. "The executive board will name the man. I have no idea who they'll put the finger on."

The hell you don't, thought Blaine.

"You're sure about it being suicide?"

"Certain," Farris said. "Gie-

sey had a heart history, he was worried."

He rose and reached for his cap, put it on. "I like a man who thinks fast on his feet. Keep thinking on your feet, Blaine. We'll get along."

"I'm sure we will."

Don't forget about tonight."

"I'll be seeing you," Blaine told him.

IV

THE Buttonholer had seized upon Norman Blaine that morning, after he had parked his car, just when he was leaving the lot. How the man had gotten in, Blaine could not imagine, but there he was, waiting for a victim. "Just a second, sir," he said.

Blaine swung around toward him. The man took a quick step forward, put out both his hands and clasped Blaine's lapels firmly. Blaine backed away, but the man's fingers held their grip and halted him.

"Let me go," Blaine said, but the man told him, "Not until I've had a word with you. You work at the Center and you're just the man I want to talk with. Because if I can make you understand — why, then, sir, I know that there is hope."

"Hope," he said, a fine spray of saliva flying from between his lips — "hope that we can make the people under-

stand the viciousness of Dreams. Because they are vicious, sir, they undermine the moral fiber of the people. They hold the opportunity for quick escape from the troubles and the problems which develop character. With the Dreams, there is no need for a man to face his troubles — he can run away from them, he can seek a forgetfulness in Dreams. I tell you, sir, it is the damnation of our culture."

Remembering it now, Norman Blaine still felt the cold, quiet whiteness of the anger that had enveloped him.

"Let loose of me," he'd said. There must have been something in his tone which warned the Buttonholer, for the man let loose his grip and backed away. And Blaine, lifting his arm to wipe his face upon his coat sleeve, watched him back away then finally turn and run.

It had been the first time he'd ever been seized upon by a Buttonholer, although he had heard of them often and had laughed them off.

NOW, THINKING back upon it, he was surprised at the impact of his encounter with a Buttonholer — his horror that here, finally, he had physical evidence that there were persons in the world who doubted the sincerity and the purpose of the Dreams.

He jerked himself away from

his reverie; there were other more important things with which to concern himself. Giesey's death and the sheet of paper he had found upon the floor — the strange conduct of Farris. *Almost, he thought, as if there were a conspiracy between the two of us — as if he and I had been involved in some gigantic plot, now coming to fruition.*

He sat quietly behind his desk and tried to think it out.

Given a moment to consider, he was certain that he would not have snatched the paper off the floor; given another moment for consideration, even after having seen what it was, he was certain that he would have dropped it back on the floor again. But there had been no time at all. Farris and his goons were already on their way and Blaine had stood defenseless in the office with a dead man, without an adequate explanation of why he should be there, without an adequate answer to any of the questions that they were sure to ask him.

The paper had given him a reason for being in the office, had given him the answer to the questions, had forestalled many other questions that would have been asked if he had not had the answer to the first ones.

Farris had said suicide.

Would it have been suicide

or murder, Blaine wondered, if he had not had the paper in his pocket? If he had remained defenseless, would his luckless position have been used to explain Giesey's death?

Farris had said he liked a man who could think standing on his feet. And there was no doubt he did. For Farris himself was a man who could think standing on his feet, who could improvise and trim his course with each passing situation.

And he was not a man to trust.

BLAINE WONDERED if the appointment still would have come through if he'd not been there to pick it off the carpet. Certainly he was not the sort of man Paul Farris would have picked to take over Roemer's job. Would Farris, finding the appointment on the floor, have destroyed it and forged another, appointing someone more to his liking to the post?

And, another question: What was the importance of the job? Why did it matter, or seem to matter so much, who was appointed to it? No one had said, of course, that it was important; but Farris had been interested and Paul Farris never was interested in unimportant things.

Could the appointment, in some way, have been linked with Lew Giesey's death.

Blaine shook his head. There was no way that one could answer.

The important thing was that he had the appointment — that Giesey's death had not prevented its delivery, that for the moment at least Farris was willing to let the situation ride.

But, Norman Blaine warned himself, he could not afford to take Farris at face value. As steward-of the guild, Paul Farris was a police official with a loyal corps of men, with wide discretion in carrying out his functions, politically-minded and unscrupulous, busily carving out a niche large enough to fit full-scale ambition.

More than likely Giesey's death fitted in with this ambition. It was not beyond reason that Farris might, in some small and hidden way, have contributed — if, in fact, he had not engineered it.

Suicide, he had said. Poison. Worried. Heart history. Easy words to say. Watch your step, Blaine told himself. Take it easy. Make no sudden moves. And be ready to duck. Especially — be ready to duck.

HE SAT quietly, letting the turmoil of speculation run out of his mind. *No use thinking of it*, he told himself. *No use at all right now*. Later, when and if he had some facts to go on — then would be the time to think.

He glanced at the clock and it was three fifteen. Too-early to go home.

And there was work to do. Tomorrow he'd be moving up to another office, but today there still was work to do.

He picked up the Jenkins folder and looked at it. A big game hunt, the two zany fabricators had said. We gave him the works, they'd said, or words to that effect.

He flipped the folder open and ran through the first few pages, shuddering just a little.

No accounting for tastes, he thought.

He remembered Jenkins — a great, massive brute of a man who had bellowed out a flow of language that had made the office quake.

Well, maybe he can take it, Blaine thought. *Anyhow, it is what he asked for*.

He tucked the folder under his arm and went out into the reception room.

IRMA SAID, "We just heard the word."

"About Giesey, you mean."

"No, we heard that earlier.

We all felt badly; I guess everybody liked him. But I mean the word about you. It's all over now. Why didn't you tell us right away? We think it's wonderful."

"Why, thank you, Irma."

— "We'll miss you, though."

"That is good for you."

"Why did you keep it secret? Why didn't you let us know?"

"I didn't know myself until this morning; I guess I got too busy. Then Giesey called."

"There were goons all over the place, going through the waste baskets. I think they even went through your desk. What was the matter with them?"

"Just curious." Blaine went out into the hall and the chill of fear crept up his spine with every step he took.

He had known it before, of course, with Farris' crack about thinking on one's feet, but this put the clincher on it. This left no doubt at all that Farris knew he'd lied.

Maybe there was some merit in it, after all, though. His lie and bluff put him, momentarily, into Farris' class — made Blaine the kind of man the goon leader was able to understand, the kind of man he could do business with.

But could he keep up the bluff? Could he be tough enough?

Keep cool, Blaine, he told himself. No sudden moves. Ready to duck, although you can't let them know you are. Poker face, he told himself — the kind of face you use when you face an applicant.

He tramped on and the coldness wore away.

GOING DOWN the stairs into Myrt's room, the old magic gripped him once again.

There she sat — the great machine of dreams, the ultimate in the fabrication of the imaginative details of man's wildest fantasies.

He stood in the silence of the place and felt the majesty and peace, the almost-tenderness, that he always felt — as if Myrt were some sort of protective mother-goddess to which one might flee for understanding and unquestioning refuge.

He tucked the folder more tightly under his arm and walked softly across the floor, fearing to break the hush of the place with an awkward, or a heavy footfall.

He mounted the stairs that led to the great keyboard, and sat down in the traveling seat which would move at the slightest touch to any part of the coding panels. He clamped the open folder on a clipboard in front of him and reached out to the query lever. He pressed it, and an indicator winked a flashing green. The machine was clear, he could feed in his data.

He punched in the identification and then he sat in silence — as he often sat in silence there.

This he would miss, Blaine knew, when he moved up to that other job. Here he was like a priest, a sort of com-

municant with a force that he revered, but could not understand — not in its entirety. For no man could know the structure of the dream machine in its entirety. It was too vast and complicated a mechanism to be fixed in any mind.

It was a computer with magic built into it, and freed from the utter, straight-line logic of other, less fabulous computers. It dealt in fantasy rather than in fact — it was a gigantic plot machine that wove out of punched-in symbols and equations the strange stories of many different lives. It took in code and equations and it dished out dreams!

BLAINÉ started to punch in the data from the folder sheets, moving swiftly about the face of the coding panel in the traveling chair. The panel began to twinkle with many little lights and from the dream machine came the first faint sounds of tripping relays, the hum of power stirring through the mechanisms, the click of control counters, the faint, far-off chattering of memory files being probed, and the purr of narrative sequence channels getting down to work.

He worked on in a tense, closed-in world of concentration, setting up the co-ordinates from sheet after sheet. Time came to an end and there was no other world than the

panel with its myriad keys, and trips and buttons, and its many flashing lights.

Finally he was done, the last sheet fluttered down to the floor from the empty clipboard. Time took up again and the room came into being. Norman Blaine sat limply, shirt soaked with perspiration, hair damp against his forehead, hands resting in his lap.

The machine was thundering now. Lights flashed by the thousands, some of them winking steadily, others running bright little sequences like lazy lightning flashes. The sound of power surged within the room, filling it to bursting, and yet beneath the hum of power could be heard the busy thumps and clicks and the erratic insane chattering of racing mechanisms.

Wearily Blaine got out of the chair and picked up the fallen sheets, bundling them together, helter-skelter, without regard to numbering, back into the folder.

He walked to the far end of the machine and stood staring for a moment at the glass-protected cabinet where tape was spinning on a reel. He watched the spinning tape, fascinated, as always, by the thought that upon the tape was impressed the seeming life of a dream that might last a century or a thousand years — a dream built with such sheer story-tell-

ing skill that it would never pall, but would be fresh and real until the very last.

He turned away and walked to the stairway, went halfway up, then turned and looked back.

It was his last dream, he knew, the last he'd ever punch; tomorrow he'd be on another job. He raised his arm in half salute.

"So long, Myrt," he said.

Myrt thundered back at him.

V

IRMA HAD left for the day and the office was empty, but there was a letter, addressed to Blaine, propped against the ash tray on his desk. The envelope was bulky and distorted when he picked it up, it jangled.

Norman Blaine ripped it open and a ring, crowded full of keys, fell out of it and clattered on the desk. A sheet of paper slipped halfway out and stuck.

He pushed the keys to one side, took out the sheet of paper and unfolded it. There was no salutation. The note began abruptly: *I called to turn over the keys, but you were out and your secretary didn't know when you would be back. There seemed no point in staying. If you should want to see me later, I am at your service. Roemer.*

He let the note fall out of his hand and flutter to the desk. He picked up the keys and tossed them up and down, listening to them jangle, catching them in his palm.

What would happen to John Roemer now, he wondered. Had a place been made for him, or hadn't Giesey gotten around to appointing him to some other post? Or had Giesey intended that man be out entirely? That seemed unlikely, for the guild took care of its own; it did not, except under extreme provocation, throw a man out on his own.

And, for that matter, who would take over the direction of Fabrication? Had Lew Geissey died before he could make an appointment? George or Herb—either one of them—would be in line, but they hadn't said a word. They would have said something, Blaine was sure, if they had been notified.

HE PICKED UP the sheet of paper and read the note again. It was noncommittal, completely deadpan; there was nothing to be learned from it.

He wondered how Roemer might feel about being summarily replaced, but there was no way of knowing; the note certainly gave no clue. And why had he been replaced? There had been rumors, all sorts of rumors, about a shake-

up in the Center, but the rumors had stopped short of the reasons for the shakeup.

It seemed a little strange — this leaving of the keys, the transfer of authority symbolized by the leaving of the keys. It was as if Roemer had thrown them on Blaine's desk, said: "There they are, boy; they're all yours," and then had left without another word.

Just a little burned up, perhaps. Just a little hurt.

But the man had come in person. Why? Under ordinary circumstances, Blaine knew, Roemer would have stayed to break in the man who was to succeed him, then would have gone up to Records. But Roemer would have stayed on until his successor knew the ropes.

These were not ordinary circumstances. Come to think of it, they seemed to be turning out to be most extraordinary.

IT WAS a fouled-up mess, Norman Blaine told himself. Going through regular channels, it would have been all right—a normal operation, the shifts made without disruption. But the appointment had not gone through channels; and had Blaine not been the one to find Lew Giesey dead, had he not seen the paper on the floor, the appointment might not have gone through at all.

But the job was his—he'd stuck out his neck to get it

and it was his. It was not something he had sought, but now that he had it, he'd keep it. It was a step up the ladder; it was advancement. It paid better, had more prestige, and put him closer to the top—third from the top, in fact, for the chain of command ran: business agent, Protection, and then Records.

He'd tell Harriet tonight—but, no, he kept forgetting; he'd not see Harriet tonight.

He put the keys in his pocket and picked up the note again. *If you should want to see me later, I am at your service.*

Protocol? he wondered. Or was there something that he might need to know? Something that needed telling?

Could it be that Roemer had come to tell him something and then had lost his nerve?

Blaine crumpled the note and hurled it to the floor. He wanted to get out, get away from Center, get out where he could try to think it out, plan what he was to do. He should clean out his desk, he knew, but it was late—far past quitting time. And there was his date with Harriet—no, damn it, he kept forgetting. Harriet had called and said she couldn't make it.

There'd be time tomorrow to clean out his desk. He took his hat and coat and went out to the parking lot.

AN ARMED GUARD had replaced the regular attendant at the entrance to the lot. Blaine showed his identification.

"All right, sir," said the guard. "Keep an eye peeled, though. A suspendee got away."

"Got away?"

"Sure; just woke a week or two ago."

"He can't get far," said Blaine. "Things change; he'll give himself away. How long was he in Sleep?"

"Five hundred years, I think."

"Things change a lot in five hundred years. He hasn't got a chance."

The guard shook his head. "I feel sorry for him. Must be tough, waking up like that."

"It's tough, all right. We try to tell them, but they never listen."

"Say," said the guard, "you're the one who found Giesey."

Blaine nodded.

"Was it the way they tell it? Was he dead when you got there?"

"He was dead."

"Murdered?"

"I don't know."

"It does beat hell. You get up to the top, then pouf..."

"It does beat hell," agreed Blaine.

"You never know."

"No, you never do." Blaine hurried off.

HE DROVE OUT of the lot and swung onto the highway. Dusk was just beginning and the road was almost deserted.

Norman Blaine drove slowly, watching the autumn countryside slide past. The first lamps glimmered from the windows of the villas set upon the hills; there was the smell of burning leaves and of the slow, sad dying of the year.

Thoughts flitted at him, like the skimming birds hurrying to a night-time tree, but he batted them away—the Buttonholer who had grabbed him—what Farris might suspect or know and what he might intend to do—why John Roemer had called personally to deliver the keys, and then had decided not to wait—why a suspendee should escape.

And that last one was a funny deal; it was downright crazy, when you thought about it. What could possibly be gained by such an escape, such a fleeing out into an alien world for which one was not prepared? It would be like going to an alien planet all alone without adequate briefing. It would be like walking onto a job with which one had no acquaintance and trying to bluff one's way.

I wonder why, he thought. *I wonder why he did it.*

He brushed the thought away; there was too much to

think of. He'd have to get it straightened out before he could think it through. He could not allow himself to get the thoughts all cluttered up.

He reached out to the dash and turned on the radio.

A COMMENTATOR was saying: "... who know their political history can recognize the crisis points that now are becoming more clearly defined. For more than five hundred years, the government, in actuality, has been in the hands of the Central Labor Union. Which is to say that the government is rule by committee, with each of the guilds and unions represented on the central group. That such a group should be able to continue in control for five full centuries—for the last 60 years in openly admitted control—is not so much to be attributed to wisdom, forbearance or patience, as to a fine balance of power which has obtained within the body at all times. Mutual distrust and fear have at no time allowed any one union or guild or any combination to become dominant. As soon as one group threatened to become so, the personal ambitions of other groups operated to undermine the ascendant group.

"But this, as everyone must recognize, is a situation which has lasted longer than could normally have been expected.

For years the stronger unions have been building up their strength—and not trying to use it. You may be sure that none of them will attempt to use their strength until they're absolutely sure of themselves. Just where any of them stand, strength-wise, is impossible to say, for it is not good strategy that any union should let its strength be known. The day cannot be too far distant when there must be a matching of this strength. The situation, as it stands, must seem intolerable to some of the stronger unions with ambitious leaders..."

Blaine turned off the radio and was astonished at the solemn peace of the autumn evening. It was all old stuff, anyway. So long as he could remember, there had been commentators talking thus. There were eternal rumors which at one time would name Transportation as the union that would take over, and at another time would hint at Communications, and at still another time would insist—just as authoritatively—that Food was the one to watch.

Dreams, he told himself smugly, were beyond that kind of politics. The guild—his guild—stood for public service. It was represented on Central, as was its right and duty, but it had never played at politics.

It was Communications that was always stirring up a fuss

with articles in the papers and blatting commentators. If he didn't miss his guess, Blaine told himself, Communications was the worst of all—in there every minute waiting for its chance. Education, too; Education was always fouling up the detail, and what a bunch of creeps!

HE SHOOK his head, thinking of how lucky he was to be with Dreams—not to have to feel a sense of guilt when the rumors came around. You could be sure that Dreams never would be mentioned; of all the unions, Dreams was the only one that could stand up straight and tall.

He'd argued with Harriet about Communications, and at times she had gotten angry with him; she seemed to have the stubborn notion that Communications was the union which had the best public service record and the cleanest slate.

It was natural, of course, Blaine admitted, that one should think his own particular union was all right. Unions were the only loyalty to which a man could cling. Once, long ago, there had been nations and the love of one's own nation was known as patriotism. But now the unions had taken their place.

He drove into the valley that wound among the hills, and fi-

nally turned off the highway and followed the winding road that climbed into the hills.

Dinner would be waiting and Ansel would be cross (he was a cranky robot at the best). Philo would be waiting for him at the gate and they'd ride in together.

He passed Harriet's house and stared briefly at it, set well back among the trees, but there were no lights. Harriet wasn't home. An assignment, she had said; an interview with someone.

HE TURNED IN at his own gate and Philo was there, barking out his heart. Norman Blaine slowed the car and the dog jumped in, reached up to nuzzle his master's cheek just once, then settled sedately in the seat while they wheeled around the drive to stop before the house.

Philo leaped out quickly and Blaine got out more slowly. It had been a tiring day, he told himself. Now that he was home, he suddenly was tired.

He stood for a moment, looking at the house. It was a good house, he thought; a good place for a family—if he ever could persuade Harriet to give up her news career.

A voice said: "All right. You can turn around now. And take it easy; don't try any funny stuff."

Slowly Blaine turned. A man

stood beside the car in the gathering dusk. He held a glinting object in his hand and he said, "There's nothing to be afraid of; I don't intend you any harm. Just don't get gay about it."

The man's clothes were wrong; they seemed to be some sort of uniform. And his words were wrong. The inflection was a bit off color, concise and crisp, lacking the slurring of one word into another which marked the language. And the phrases—*funny stuff; don't get gay.*

"This is a gun I have. No monkey business, please."

Monkey business.

"You are the man who escaped," said Blaine.

"That I am."

"But how..."

"I rode all the way with you. Hung underneath the car; those dumb cops didn't think to look."

THE MAN shrugged. "I regretted it once or twice. You drove further than I hoped. I almost let go a time or two."

"But me? Why did you..."

"Not you, mister; anyone at all. It was a way to hide—a means to get away."

"I don't read you," Blaine told him. "You could have made a clean break; you could have let go at the gate. The car was going slow then. You could

have sneaked away right now. I'd never noticed you."

"And been picked up as soon as I showed myself. The clothes are a giveaway. So is my speech. Then there's my eating habits, and maybe even the way I walk. I would stick out like a bandaged thumb."

"I see," said Blaine. "All right, then; put up the gun. You must be hungry. We'll go in and eat."

The man put away the gun. He patted his pocket. "I still have it, and I can get it fast. Don't try any swifties."

"O.K.," said Blaine. "No swifties." Thinking: *Picturesque. Swifties.* Never heard the word. But it had a meaning; there could be no doubt of that.

"By the way, how did you get that gun?"

"That's something," said the man, "I'm not telling you."

VI

HIS NAME, the fugitive said, was Spencer Collins. He'd been in suspension for five hundred years; he'd come out of it just a month before. Physically, he said, he was as good a man as ever—fifty-five, and well preserved. He'd paid attention to himself all his life—had eaten right, hadn't gone without sleep, had exercised both mind and body, knew something about psychosomatics.

"I'll say this for your outfit," he told Blaine, "you know how to take care of a sleeper's body. I was a little gaunt when I came out; a little weak; but there'd been no deterioration."

Norman Blaine chuckled. "We're at work at it constantly. I don't know anything about it, of course, but the biology boys are at it all the time—it's a continuing problem with them. A practical problem. During your five hundred years you probably were shifted a dozen times or more—to a better receptacle each time, with improvements in the operation. You got the benefit of the new improvements as soon as we worked them out."

Collins had been a professor of sociology, he said, and he'd evolved a theory. "You'll excuse me if I don't go into what it was."

"Why, certainly," said Blaine.

"It's not of too much interest except to the academic mind. I presume you're not an academic mind."

"I suppose I'm not."

"It involved long-term social development," Collins told him. "I figured that five hundred years should show some indication of whether I had been right or wrong. I was curious. It's rough to figure out a thing, then up and die without ever knowing if it comes true or not."

"I can understand."

"If you doubt me in any detail you can check the record."

"I don't doubt a word of it," said Blaine.

"You are used to screwball cases."

"Screwball?"

"Loopy. Crazy."

"I see many screwball cases," Blaine assured him.

But nothing quite so screwball as this, he thought. Nothing quite so crazy as sitting on the patio beneath the autumn stars, on his own home acres, talking to a man five centuries out of time. If he were in Readjustment, of course, he'd be accustomed to it, would not think it strange at all; Readjustment worked continually with cases just like this.

COLLINS WAS fascinating. His inflection betrayed the change in the spoken language, and there were those slang words always cropping up—idioms of the past that had somehow missed fire and found no place within the living language, although many others had survived.

At dinner there had been dishes the man had tackled with distrust, others that he'd eaten with disgust showing on his face, yet too polite to refuse them outright — determined, perhaps, to do his best to fit into the culture in which he found himself.

There were certain little

manperisms and affectations that seemed pointless now; performed too often, they could become distinctly irritating. These were actions like stroking his chin when he was thinking, or popping joints by pulling at his fingers. That last one, Blaine told himself, was unnerving and indecent. Perhaps in the past it had not been ill-bred to fiddle with one's body. He'd have to look that one up, he told himself, or maybe ask someone. The boys in Readjustment would know—they'd know a lot of things.

"I wonder if you'd tell me," Blaine asked,—“this theory of yours. Did it work out the way you thought it would?”

"I don't know. You'll agree, perhaps, that I've scarcely been in a position to find out."

"I suppose that's true. But I thought you might have asked."

"I didn't ask," said Collins.

THEY SAT in the evening silence, looking out across the valley.

"You've come a long way in the last five hundred years," Collins finally said. "When I went to sleep, we were speculating on the stars and everyone was saying that the light speed limit had us licked on that. But today..."

"I know," said Blaine. "Another five hundred years..."

"You could go on forever and forever—"sleep a t h o u s a n d

years and see what had happened. Then another..."

"It wouldn't be worth it."

"You're telling me," said Collins.

A nighthawk skimmed above the trees and planed into the sky in jerky, fluttering motions, busy catching insects. "That doesn't change," said Collins. "I can remember nighthawks..."

He paused, then asked. "What are you going to do with me?"

"You're my guest."

"Until the keepers come."

"We'll talk about it later; you are safe tonight."

"There is one thing you've been wondering about; I've watched it gnawing at you."

"Why you ran away."

"That is it," said Collins.

"Well?"

"I chose a dream," said Collins, "such as you might expect. I asked a professorial retreat—a sort of idealized monastery where I could spend my time in study, where I could live with other men who could talk my language. I wanted peace—a walk along a quiet river, a good sunset, simple food, time for reading and for thinking..."

BLAINE NODDED appreciatively. "A good choice, Collins; there should be more like it."

"I thought so, too," said Col-

lins. "It was what I wanted."

"It proved enjoyable?"

"I wouldn't know."

"Wouldn't know?"

"I never got it."

"But the Dream was fabricated..."

"I got a different dream."

"There was some mistake."

"No mistake," said Collins; "I am sure there wasn't."

"When you ask a certain dream," Blaine began, speaking stiffly, but Collins cut him short. "There was no mistake, I tell you. The dream was substituted."

"How could you know that?"

"Because the dream they gave me wasn't one that anyone would ask for. Not even one that ever would be thought of. It was one that was deliberately tailored for some reason I can't figure out. It was a different world."

"An alien world!"

"Not alien; it was Earth, all right—but a different culture. I lived five hundred years in that world, every minute of five hundred years. The dream pattern was not shortened as I understand they often are, telescoping a thousand years of sleep into a normal lifetime. I got the works, the full five hundred years. I know what the score is when I tell you that it was a deliberately fashioned dream—no mistake at all—but fashioned for a purpose."

"Now let's not rush ahead so

fast," protested Blaine. "Let us take it easy. The world had a different culture?"

"It was a world," said Collins, "in which the profit motive had been eliminated, in which the concept of profit never had been thought of. It was the same world that we have, but lacking in all the factors and forces which in our world stem from the profit motive. To me, of course, it was utterly fantastic, but to the natives of the place—if you can call them that—it seemed the normal thing."

HE WATCHED Blaine closely. "I think you'll agree," he said, "that no one would want to live in a world like that. No one would ask a Dream like that."

"Some economist, perhaps..."

"An economist would know better. And, aside from that, there was a terribly consistent pattern to the dream that no one without prior knowledge could ever figure out to put into a dream."

"Our machine..."

"Your machine would have no more prior knowledge than you yourself. No more, at least, than your best economist. And another thing—that machine is illogical; that's the beauty of it. It needn't think in logic. It shouldn't, because that would

spoil the Dream. A Dream should not be logical."

"And yours was logical?"

"Very logical," said Collins. "You can figure out the factors hell to breakfast and you can't tell what will happen until you see a thing in action. That is logic for you."

He rose and walked across the patio, then walked back again, stood facing Blaine. "That's why I ran away. There's something dirty going on; I can't trust that gang of yours."

"I don't know," said Blaine. "I simply do not know."

"I can clear out if you want me to; no need to get yourself messed up in a deal like this. You took me in and fed me, gave me clothes, and you listened to me. I don't know how far I can get, but..."

"No," said Blaine, "you're staying here. This is something that needs investigation, and I may need you later on. Keep out of sight. Don't mind the robots. We can trust them; they won't talk."

"If they smell me out," said Collins, "I'll manage to get off your land before they nab me. Caught; I'll keep my mouth shut."

Norman Blaine rose slowly and held out his hand. Collins took it in a swift, sure grip. "It's a deal."

"It's a deal," echoed Blaine.

VII

AT NIGHT, the Center was a place of ghosts, its deserted corridors ringing with their emptiness. Men worked throughout the building, Blaine knew—the Readjustment force; the Conditioners; the Tank Room gang, but there was no sign of them.

A robot guard stepped out of his embrasure. "Who goes there?"

"Blaine. Norman Blaine."

The robot stood for a second, whirring gently, searching through its memory banks to find the name of Blaine. "Identification," it said.

Blaine held up his identification disk. "Pass, Blaine," the robot said, then tried an amenity. "Working late?"

"Something I forgot," Blaine told it.

He went along the corridor and took the elevator, got out at the sixth.

Another robot stopped him. He identified himself.

"You're on the wrong floor, Blaine."

"New appointment." He showed the robot the form.

"All right, Blaine," it said.

BLAINE WENT along the corridor and found the door to Records. He tried six keys

before he hit the right one and the door swung open.

He closed the door behind him and waited until he could see a little before he found the light switch.

There was a front office; off it, a door led into the record stacks. What he sought should be here somewhere, Blaine told himself. Myrt would have finished it hours before—the Jenkins dream of big game hunting in the steaming jungle.

It would not have been filed as yet, might not be filed at all, for Jenkins would be coming in to take the Sleep in just a day or two. Perhaps there was a rack somewhere where the dreams-to-be-called-for were placed against their use.

He walked around a desk and looked about the room. Filing cabinets, more desks, a testing cubicle, a drink and lunch dispenser, and a rack in which were stacked half a dozen reels.

He walked swiftly to the rack and picked up the first reel. He found the Jenkins Dream five reels down and stood with it in his hand, wondering just how insane a man could get.

Collins must be mistaken, or there had been some mistake—or it was all a lie, directed to what purpose he had no idea. It simply couldn't be, Blaine told himself, that a dream would be deliberately substituted.

But he had come this far.

Thus far he had made a fool out of himself...

He shrugged; he might just as well go all the way now that he was here.

REEL IN hand, Norman Blaine walked into the testing cubicle and closed the door behind him. He inserted the reel and set the time at thirty minutes; then he put the cap upon his head and lay down upon the bed. Reaching out, he turned on the mechanism.

There was a faint whirring of the mechanism. Something puffed into his face and the whirr was gone; the cubicle was gone and Blaine stood in a desert, or what seemed to be a desert.

The landscape was red and yellow; there was a sun, and heat rose up from sand and rocks to strike him in the face. He raised his head to stare out at the horizons and saw that they lay far distant, for the land was flat. A lizard ran, squeaking, from the shade of one rock to the shadow of another. Far in the hot silk-blue of the sky a bird was circling.

He saw that he stood upon a road of sorts; it wound across the desert's face until it was lost in the heat-wavers that rose up from the tortured ground. And far off on the road a black speck travelled slowly.

He looked around for shade and there was no shade, nothing

big enough to cast a shadow for anything bigger than the scuttling, squeaking lizard.

Blaine lifted his hands and looked at them; they were tanned so deeply, that for a moment, he thought that they were black. He wore a pair of ragged trousers, chewed off between knee and ankle and a tattered shirt, plastered to his back with sweat. He wore no shoes; and wondered about that until he lifted his feet and saw the horn-like callouses that had grown upon them to protect them from the heat and rocks.

WONDERING dimly what he might be doing here, what he had been doing a moment before, what he was supposed to do, Norman Blaine stood and stared off across the desert. There was not a thing to see—just the red and yellow and the sand and heat.

He shuffled his feet in the sand, digging holes with his toes, then smoothing them out again with the flat of his calloused feet. Then the memory of who he was, and what he had meant to do, came seeping slowly back. It came in snatches and in dribbles; and a great deal of it did not seem to make much sense.

He had left his home village that morning to travel to a city. There was some important reason why he should make the trip, although for the life of

him he could not think of the reason. He had come from that-away and he was going this-away; he wished that he could at least remember the name of his home village. It would be embarrassing if he met someone who asked him where he hailed from, and he could not tell them. He wished, too, that he could remember the name of the city he was going to, but that didn't matter quite so much. After a time, he'd get there and learn the name.

HE STARTED down the road, going thisaway, and he seemed to remember that he had a long way to travel yet. Somehow or other, he'd fooled around and lost a lot of time; it behooved him to get a hustle on if he expected to reach the city before nightfall.

He saw the black dot moving on the road and now it seemed much closer.

He was not afraid of the black dot and that was encouraging, he told himself. But when he tried to figure out why it should be so encouraging, Blaine simply couldn't say.

And because he had wasted a lot of time and had a long way yet to go, he broke into a trot. He legged it down the road as fast as he could go, despite the roughness of the trail and the hotness of the sun. As he ran he slapped his pockets and found that in one of them

he carried certain objects. He knew immediately that the objects were of more than ordinary value; in a little while, he'd know what the objects were.

The black dot drew nearer; finally, it was close enough so that Blaine could see it was a large cart with wooden wheels. It was drawn by a fly-blown camel; a man sat upon the seat of the cart, beneath a tattered umbrella that, at one time, might have been colorful but now was leached by the sun to a filthy gray.

He approached the cart, still running, and finally drew abreast of it. The man yelled something at the camel, which stopped.

"You took your time," he said. "Now get up here; get a wiggle on."

"I was detained," said Blaine.

"You were detained," sneered the other man, and thrust the reins at Blaine, jumping off the cart.

Blaine yelled at the camel and slapped him with the reins; he wondered what in hell was going on, and he was back in the cubicle again. His shirt was stuck against his back with perspiration, and he could feel the heat of the desert sun fading from his face.

HE LAY for a long moment, gathering his wits, re-orienting himself. Beside him

the reel moved slowly, bunching up the tape against the helmet slot. Blaine reached out a hand and stopped it, slowly spun it backwards to take up the tape.

There the horror of it dawned upon him, and for a moment he was afraid that he might cry out; but the cry died in his throat and he lay there motionless, frozen with the realization of what had happened.

He swung his feet off the cot and jerked the reel from its holder, stripping the tape out of the helmet. He turned the reel on its side and read the number and the name. The name was Jenkins, and the number was the identifying code he'd punched into the dream machine that very afternoon. There could be no mistake about it. The reel held the Jenkins dream. It was the reel that would be sent down in another day or two, when Jenkins came to take the sleep.

And Jenkins, who had hankered for a big-game hunting trip, who had wanted to spend the next two hundreds years on a shooting orgy, would find himself standing in a red and yellow desert on a track that could be called a road only by the utmost courtesy; in the distance he would see a moving dot, that would turn out later to be a camel and a chart.

He'd find himself in a desert

with ragged pants and tattered shirt and with something in his pocket of more than ordinary value—but there would be no jungles and no veldt; there'd be no guns and no safari. There'd be no hunting trip at all.

How many others? Blaine asked himself. *How many others failed to get the dream they wanted?* And what was more: *Why had they failed to get the dream they wanted?*

Why had the dreams been substituted?

Or had they been substituted? Had Myrt—

He shook his head at that one. The great machine did what it was told. It took in the symbols and equations and it chattered and it clanked and thundered, and it spun the dream that was asked of it.

Substitution was the only answer, for the dreams were monitored in this very cubicle. No dream went out until someone had checked to see that it was the dream ordered by the Sleeper.

COLLINS HAD lived out five hundred years in a world which lacked the profit concept. And the red and yellow desert—what kind of world was that? Norman Blaine had not been there long enough to know; but there was one thing he did know—that, like Collins' world, the Jenkins world

was one no one would ask to live in.

The cart had wooden wheels and had been pulled by camel-power; that might mean that it was a world in which the idea of mechanized transportation never had been thought of. But it might, as well, be any one of a thousand other kinds of cultures.

Blaine opened the door of the cubicle and went out. He put the reel back in the rack and stood for a moment in the center of the icy room. After a moment, he realized that it was not the room that was icy, but himself.

This afternoon, when he had talked with Lucinda Silone Blaine had thought of himself as a dedicated person, had thought of the Center and the guild as a place of dedication. He had talked unctuously of the fact there must be no taint upon the guild, that it must at all times perform its services so as to merit the confidence of anyone who might apply for Sleep.

And where was that dedication now? Where was the public confidence?

How many others had been given substituted dreams? How long had this been going on? Five hundred years ago, Spencer Collins had been given a dream that was not the dream he wanted. So the Tampering

had been going on five hundred years, at least.

And how many others in the years to come?

LUCINDA SILONE—what kind of dream would she get? Would it be the mid-nineteenth century plantation or some other place? How many of the dreams that Blaine had helped in fabricating had been changed?

He thought of the girl who had sat across the desk from him that morning—the honey color hair and the blue eyes, the milky whiteness of her skin, the way she talked, the things she had said, and the others that she had not said.

She, too, he thought.

And there was an answer to that. He moved swiftly toward the door.

VIII

HE CLIMBED the steps and rang the bell; a voice told him to come in.

Lucinda Silone sat in a chair beside a window. There was only one light—a dim light—in the far corner of the room, so that she sat in shadow. "Oh, it's you," she said. "You do the investigating, too."

"Miss Silone..."

"Come in and have a seat. I'm quite willing to answer any questions; you see, I am still convinced..."

"Miss Silone," said Blaine, "I came to tell you not to take the Sleep. I came to warn you; I have..."

"You fool," she said. "You utter, silly fool."

"But..."

"Get out of here," she told him.

"But it's..."

She rose out of her chair and there was scorn in every line of her. "So I can't take a chance. Go ahead; tell me it's dangerous. Go on and tell me it's a trick. You fool—I knew all that before I ever came."

"You knew..."

They stood for a moment in tense silence, each staring at the other. "And now *you* know." And she said something else he had thought himself not half an hour before: "How about that dedication now?"

"Miss Silone, I came to tell you..."

"Don't tell anyone," she said. "Go back home and forget you know it; you'll be more comfortable that way. Not dedicated, maybe, but much more comfortable. And you'll live a good deal longer."

"There is no need to threaten..."

NOT A threat, Blaine; just a tip. If word should get to Farris that you know, you could count your life in hours. And I could see that the tip got

round to Farris. I know just the way to do it."

"But Farris..."

"He's dedicated, too?"

"Well, no, perhaps not. I don't..."

The thought was laughable. Paul Farris dedicated!

"When I come back to Center," she said, speaking evenly and calmly, "we'll proceed just as if this had never happened. You'll make it your personal business to see that my Sleep goes through, without a hitch. Because if you don't, word will get to Farris."

"But why is it so important that you take the Sleep, knowing what you do?"

"Maybe I'm Entertainment," she said. "You rule out Entertainment, don't you? You asked me if I was Entertainment and you were very foxy while you were doing it. You fob off Entertainment because you're afraid they'll steal your Dreams for solidographs. They tried to do it once, and you've been jumpy ever since."

"You're not Entertainment."

"You thought so this morning. Or was that all an act?"

"It was an act," Blaine admitted miserably.

"But this tonight isn't an act," she said coldly, "because you're scared as you've never been before. Well, keep on being scared. You have a right to be."

She stood for a moment,

looking at him in disgust. "And now get out."

IX

PHILO did not meet him at the gate, but ran out of a clump of shrubbery, barking in high welcome, when he swung the car around the circle drive and stopped before the house. "Down, Philo," Blaine told him. "Down."

He climbed out of the car and Philo moved, quietly now, to stand beside him; in the quietness of the night, he could hear the click of the dog's toenails upon the bluestone walk. The house stood large and dark, although a light burned beside the door. He wondered how it was that houses and trees always seemed larger in the night, as if with the coming of the dark they took on new dimensions.

A stone crunched underneath a footstep and he swung around. Harriet stood on the path. "I was waiting for you," she said. "I thought you'd never come. Philo and I were waiting, and..."

"You gave me a start," he told her. "I thought that you were working."

She moved swiftly forward and the light from the entrance lamp fell across her face. She was wearing a low-cut dress that sparkled in the light, and a sparkling veil was flung across

her head so that it seemed she was surrounded by a thousand twinkling stars. "There was someone here," she told him.

"Someone..."

"I DROVE UP the back way. There was a car out front, and Philo was barking. I saw three of them come out the door, dragging a fourth. He was fighting and struggling, but they hurried him along and pushed him in the car. Philo was nipping at them, but they paid him no attention, they were in such a hurry. I thought at first it might be you, but then I saw it wasn't. The three were dressed like goons and I was a little frightened. I sped up and drove past and tore out on the highway, as fast as I could go, and..."

"Now, wait a minute," Blaine cautioned. "You're going too fast; take your time and tell me..."

"Then, later, I drove back, without my lights, and parked the car at my place. I came across the woods and I've been waiting for you."

She paused, breathless with her rush of words.

He reached out, put his fingers underneath her chin, tipped up her face and kissed her.

She brushed his hand away. "At a time like this," she said.

"Any time, at all."

"Norm, are you in trouble? Is someone after you?"

"There may be several who are after me."

"And you stand around and slobber over me."

"I just happened to think," he said, "of what I have to do."

"What do you have to do?"

"Go see Farris. He invited me; I forgot until just now."

"But you forget. I said goons..."

"They weren't goons. They were dressed to look like goons."

For now, suddenly, Norman Blaine saw it as a single unit with a single purpose—saw at last the network of intrigue and of purpose that he had sought since that morning.

FIRST, THERE had been the Buttonholer who had collared him; then Lucinda Silone who had wished a dream of dignity and peace; and after that, Lew Giesey, dead behind his battered desk—and finally the man who had spent five hundred years in a culture that had not discovered profit.

"But Farris..."

"Paul Farris is a friend of mine."

"He is no one's friend."

"Just like that," said Blaine, thrusting out two fingers, pressed very close together.

"I'd be careful just the same."

"Since this afternoon, Farris and I are conspiratorial pals."

We are in a deal together; Giesey died. . . ."

"I know. What has that to do with this sudden friendship?"

"Before he died, Giesey put an appointment through. I'm moving up to Records."

"Oh, Norm. I'm so glad!"

"I had hoped you'd be."

"Then what is it all about?" she asked. "Tell me what is going on. Who was that man the goons dragged out of here?"

"I told you—they weren't goons."

"Who was the man. Don't try to duck the question."

"An escapee. A man who ran away from Center."

"And you were helping him."

"Well, no. . . ."

"Norm, why should anyone want to escape from Center? Have you got folks locked up?"

"This one was an awakened suspendee. . . ."

HHE KNEW he'd said too much, but it was too late. He saw the glint in her eyes—the look he'd grown to know, "It's not a story," he said. "If you use this. . . ."

"That's what you think."

"This was in confidence."

"Nothing's in confidence; you can't talk to News in confidence."

"You'd just be guessing."

"You'd better tell me now," she said. "I can find out, anyhow."

"That old gag!"

"You may as well go ahead and tell me. It'll save me a lot of trouble, and you'll know I have it straight."

"Not another word."

"All right, smart guy," she said.

She stood on tiptoe, kissed him swiftly, then ducked away.

"Harriet!" he cried, but she had stepped back into the shadow of the shrubbery and was gone. He took a quick step forward, then halted. There was no use going after her. He could never find or catch her, for she knew the gardens and the woods that stretched between their houses full as well as he did.

Now he'd let himself in for it. By morning, the story would be in the papers.

He knew that Harriet had meant exactly what she said. Damn the woman. Fanatical, he told himself. Why couldn't she see things in their right perspective? Her loyalty to Communications was utterly fantastic.

And yet it was no more so than Norman Blaine's to Dreams. What had the commentator said when he'd been driving home? The unions were building up their strength, and it was this very fanatic loyalty—his to Dreams, Harriet's to Communications—which was the basis of that growing strength.

HE STOOD in the puddle of light before the door and shivered at the thought of the story with 96-point headlines screaming from Page One.

Not a breath of scandal, he had said that afternoon. For Dreams was built on public confidence; any hint of scandal would bring it tumbling down. And here was scandal—or something that could be made to sound very much like scandal.

There were two things he could do. He could try to stop Harriet—how, he did not know. Or he could unmask this intrigue for what it really was—a plot to eliminate Dreams in the struggle for power, a move in that Central Labor struggle about which the commentator had held forth so pontifically.

Now Blaine was sure that he knew how it all tied up, was sure that he could trace the major plot-lines that ran through these fantastic happenings. But if he meant to prove what he suspected, he didn't have much time. Harriet was already off on a hunt for the facts of which he'd given her a hint. Perhaps she'd not have them for the morning editions, but by evening the story would be broken.

And before that happened, Dreams must have its story to combat the flying rumors.

There was one fact he had to verify. A man should know

his history, Blaine told himself. It should not be a thing to be looked up in books, but carried in one's head, a ready tool for use.

Lucinda Silone had said she was Education and she would have told the truth. That was something which could be checked, one of the facts that would be checked automatically. Spencer Collins was Education, too. A professor of sociology, he had said, who had evolved a theory.

There was something in the history of the guilds concerning Dreams and Education, something about a connection that had once existed between them—and it might apply.

He went swiftly up the walk and through the hall, trudging down the hall to the study, with Philo following after. He thumbed up the switch and went quickly to the shelves. He ran a finger along a row of books until he found the one he wanted.

At the desk, he turned on the lamp and ran quickly through the pages. He found what he wanted—the fact he'd known was there, read long ago and forgotten, dimmed out by the years of never being needed.

X

FARRIS' house was surrounded by a great metallic wall, too high to jump, too smooth to climb. A

guard was posted at the gate and another at the door.

The first guard frisked Blaine; the second demanded identification. When he was satisfied, he called a robot to take the visitor to Farris.

Paul Farris had been drinking. The bottle on the table beside his chair was better than half empty. "You took your time in coming," he growled.

"I got busy."

"Doing what, my friend?"

Farris pointed at the bottle. "Help yourself. There are glasses in the rack."

Blaine poured out liquor until the glass was almost full. He said casually, "Giesey was murdered, wasn't he?"

THE LIQUOR in Farris' glass slopped slightly, but there was no other sign. "The verdict was suicide."

"There was a glass on the desk," said Blaine. "He'd just had a drink out of the carafe; there was poison in the water."

"Why don't you tell me something I don't know?"

"And you're covering up for someone."

"Could be," Farris said. "Could be, too, it's none of your damn business."

"I was just thinking. Education..."

"What's that!"

"Education has been carrying a knife for us for a long time now. I looked up the history of

it. Dreams started as a branch of education, a technique for learning while you were asleep. But we got too big for them, and we got some new ideas—a thousand years ago. So we broke away, and..."

"Now, wait a minute; say that slow, again."

"I have a theory."

"You have a head, too, Blaine. A good imagination. That's what I said this afternoon; you think standing."

Farris lifted his glass and emptied it in a single gulp. "We'll stick the knife into them," he said, dispassionately. "Clear up to their gizzard."

Still dispassionately, he hurled the glass against the wall. It exploded into dust. "Why the hell, couldn't someone have thought of that to start with? It would have made it simple... Sit down, Blaine. I think we got it made."

BLAINE SAT down and suddenly was sick—sick at the realization that he had been wrong. It was not Education which had engineered the murder. It had been Paul Farris—Farris and how many others? For no one man—even with the organization the goon leader had at his command—could have worked on a thing like this alone.

"One thing I want to know," said Farris. "How did you get that appointment? You didn't

get it the way you said; you weren't meant to get it."

"I found it on the floor; it fell off Giesey's desk."

There was no need of lying any longer, of lying or pretending. There was no further need of anything; the old pride and loyalty were gone. Even as Norman Blaine thought about it, the bitterness sank deeper into his soul; the futility of all the years was a torture grate that rasped across raw flesh.

Farris chuckled. "You're all right," he said. "You could have kept your mouth shut and made it stick. It takes guts to do a thing like that. We can work together."

"It still is sticking," Blaine told him sharply. "Take it away from me if you think you can."

This was sheer bravado and bitterness, a feeble hitting back, and Blaine wondered why he did it, for the job meant nothing now.

"Take it easy," Farris said. "You're keeping it. I'm glad it worked out as it did. I didn't think you had it in you, Blaine; I guess that I misjudged you."

He reached for the bottle. "Hand me another glass."

BLAINE HANDED him another glass and Farris filled both. "How much do you know?"

Blaine shook his head. "Not too much. This business of the dream substitution..."

"You hit it on the head," said Farris; "that's the core of it. We'd had to fill you in before too long, so I might as well fill you in right now."

He settled back comfortably in his chair. "It started long ago, and it has been carried on with tight security for more than seven hundred years. It had to be a long-range project, you understand, for few dreams last less than a hundred years and many last much longer. At first, the work was carried on slowly and very cautiously; in those days, the men in charge had to feel their way along. But in the last few hundred years it has been safe to speed it up. We've worked through the greater part of the program first laid out, and are taking care of some of the supplementary angles that have been added since. Less than another hundred years and we will be ready—we could be ready any time, but we'd like to wait another hundred years. We have worked up techniques from what we've already done that are plain impossible to believe. But they'll work; we have first-hand evidence that they are workable."

Blaine was cold inside, cold with the shock of disillusion. "All the years," he said.

FARRIS LAUGHED. "You're right. All the years. And all

the others thought that we were lily pure. We were at pains to make them think we were; such quiet people. We were quiet from the very start, while the others bunched their muscles, shouted. One by one they learned the lesson we had known from the very first—that you keep your mouth shut, that you do not show your strength. You wait until the proper time.

The others learned, eventually. They took their lessons hard, but they finally learned the facts of politics—too late. Even before there was a Central Union, Dreams saw what was coming and planned. We sat quietly in the corner and kept our hands neatly folded in our laps; we bowed our heads a little and kept our eyes half closed—a pose of utter meekness. Most of the time, the others didn't even know that we were around. We are so small and quiet, you see. Everyone is watching Communications or Transportation or Food or Fabrication, because they are the big boys. But they should be watching Dreams, for Dreams is the one that has it."

"Just one thing," said Blaine. "Two things, maybe. How do you know the substitute dreams run true? All the genuine ones we make are pure fantasy; they couldn't really happen the way we fabricate them."

"That," Farris told him, "is the one thing that has us on the

ropes. When we can explain that one, we'll have everything. Back at the beginning there were experiments. Dreams tried it out on their own personnel—ones who volunteered, for short periods, five years or ten. And the dreams didn't come out the way they were put in.

"When you give a dream a logical basis, instead of wish-fulfillment factors, it follows the lines of logic. When you juggle cultural factors, the patterns run true—well, maybe not true, but different than you thought they would. When you feed in illogic, you get a jumble of illogic; but when you feed in logic, the logic takes over and it shapes the dream. Our study of logic dreams leads us to believe that they follow lines of true development. Unforeseen trends show up, governed by laws and circumstances we could not have guessed—and those trends work out to logical conclusions."

THERE WAS fear in the man—a fear that must have lain deep in the minds of many men throughout seven hundred years. "Is it just pretend? Or do those dreams actually exist? Are there such other worlds somewhere? And if there are, do we create them? Or do we merely tap them?"

"How do you know about the dreams?" asked Blaine. "The

Sleepers wouldn't tell you; if they did, you couldn't believe..."

Farris laughed. "That's the easy part. We have a two-way helmet. A feed-in to establish the pattern and to set up the factors, a sort of introduction to set the dream going. It operates for a brief period, then cuts out and the dream is on its own. But we have a feed-back built into the helmet, and the dream is put on tape. We study it as it comes in; we don't have to wait. We have stacks of tape. We have at our fingertips the billions of factors that go into many thousand different cultures. We have a history of the never-was, and of the might-have-been, and perhaps the yet-to-come."

Dreams is the one that has it, he had said. They had stacks of tape from seven hundred years of dreams. They had millions of man-hours experience—first-hand experience—in cultural patterns that had never happened. Some of them could not have happened; others of them might have come within a hair-breadth of happening—and there were many of them, perhaps, that could be made to happen.

From those tapes they had learned lessons outside the curriculum of human experience. Economics, politics, sociology, philosophy, psychology—in all facets of human effort they

held all the trumps. They could pull out economic dazzlers to blind the people; they could employ political theory that would be sure to win hands down; they had psychological tricks that would stop all the other unions dead.

THEY'D PLAYED dumb for years sitting meekly in the corner, hands folded in their lap, being very quiet. And all the time they had been fashioning a weapon for use at its proper time.

And the dedication, Blaine thought, the human dedication. The pride and comfort of a job well done. The warmth of accomplishment and service—the close human fellowship.

For years the tapes had rolled, recording the feed-back, while men and women—who had come in trusting confidence to seek fairylands of their imagination—plo d d d drearily through of logic dreams that were utterly fantastic.

Farris' voice had gone on and on and now it came back to him.

"...Giesey was going soft on us. He wanted to replace Roemer with someone who would see it his way. And he picked you, Blaine—of all men, he picked you."

He laughed again, uproariously. "It does beat hell how mistaken one can be."

"Yes, it does," agreed Blaine.

"So we had to kill him before the appointment could go through; but you beat us to it, Blaine. You're a fast man on your feet. How did you know about it? How did you know what to do?"

"Never mind."

"The timing," said Farris. "The timing was perfect."

"You've got it all doped out."

Farris nodded. "I talked to Andrews. He'll go along; he doesn't like it, of course, but there's nothing he can do."

"You're taking a long chance, Farris, telling me all this."

"**N**OT A chance; you are one of us. You can't get out of it. If you say a word, you wreck the guild—and you won't have a chance to say a word. From this moment, Blaine, there's a gun against your back; there'll be someone watching all the time.

"Don't try to do it, Blaine; I like you. I like the way you operate. That Education angle is pure genius. You play along with us, and it'll be worth your while. There's nothing you *can* do but play along with us; you're in it, clear up to your chin. As the head of Records, you have custody of all the evidence, and you can't write off that fact... Go on, man; finish up that drink."

"I'd forgotten it," said Blaine.

He flicked the glass and the

liquor splashed out, into Farris' face. As if it were the same motion, Blaine's fingers left the glass, let it drop, and reached for the liquor bottle.

Paul Farris came to his feet, blinded, hands clawing at his face. Blaine rose with him, bottle arcing, and his aim was good. The bottle crashed on the goon leader's skull and the man went down upon the carpeting, with snakes of blood oozing through his hair.

For a second Norman Blaine stood there. The room and the man upon the floor suddenly were bright and sharp, each feature of the place and the shape upon the carpeting burning themselves into his consciousness. He lifted his hand and saw that he still grasped the bottle's neck with its jagged, broken edges. He hurled it from him and ran, hunched against the expected bullet, straight toward the window. He leaped and rolled himself into a ball even as he leaped, arms wrapped around his face. He crashed into the glass, heard the faint *ping* of its explosion, and then was through and falling.

HE LIT on the gravel path and rolled until thick shrubbery stopped him, then crawled swiftly toward the wall. But the wall was smooth, he remembered—not one to be climbed. Smooth and high and

with only one gate. They would hunt him down and kill him. They'd shake him out like a rabbit in a brushpile. He didn't have a chance.

He didn't have a gun and he'd not been trained to fight. All that he could do was hide and run; even so, he couldn't get away, for there wasn't much to hide in and there wasn't far to run. *But I'm glad I did it*, he told himself.

It was a blow against the shame of seven hundred years, a re-assertion of the old, dead dedication. The blow should have been struck long ago; it was useless now, except as a symbol that only Norman Blaine would know.

He wondered how much such symbolism might count in this world around him.

Blaine heard them running now, and shouting; he knew it would not be long. He huddled in the bushes and tried to plan what he should do, but everywhere he ran into blank walls and there was nothing he could do.

A voice hissed at him, a whisper from the wall. Blaine started, pressing himself further back into the clump of bushes.

"Psst," said the voice once again.

A trick, he thought, wildly. *A trick to lure me out*. Then he saw the rope, dangling from

the wall, where it was lighted by the broken window.

"Psst," said the voice.

Blaine took the chance. He leaped from the bushes and across the path toward the wall. The rope was real and was anchored. Spurred by desperation, Blaine went up it like a monkey, flung out an arm across the top of the wall and hauled himself upward. A gun cracked angrily; a bullet hit the wall and ricocheted, wailing, out into the night.

Without thinking of the danger, he hurled himself off the wall. He struck hard ground that drove the breath from him and he doubled up with agony, retching, gasping to regain his breath, while stars wheeled with tortuous deliberation in the center of his brain.

He felt hands lifting him and carrying him and heard the slamming of a door, then the flow of speed as a car howled through the night.

XI

A FACE was talking to him and Norman Blaine tried to place it; he knew that he'd seen it once before. But he couldn't recognize it; he shut his eyes, tried to find soft, cool blackness. The blackness was not soft, but harsh and painful; he opened his eyes again.

The face still was talking to him and it had shoved itself up close to him. He felt the fine spray of the other's saliva fly against his face. Once before, when a man had talked to Blaine, this had happened. That morning at the parking lot a man had buttonholed him. And here he was again, with his face thrust close and the words pouring out of him.

"Cut it out, Joe," said another voice. "He's still half out. You hit him too hard; he can't understand you."

And Blaine knew that voice, too. He put out his hand, pushed the face away, and hauled himself to a sitting position, with a rough wall against his back.

"Hello, Collins," he said to the second voice. "How did you get here?"

"I was brought," said Collins.

"So I heard."

BLAINE wondered where, he was: An old cellar, apparently—a fit place for conspirators. "Friends of yours?" he asked.

"It turns out that they are."

The face of the Buttonholer popped up once again.

"Keep him away from me," said Blaine.

Another voice told Joe to get away. And he knew that voice, too.

Joe's face left.

Blaine put up his arm and

wiped his own face. "Next," he said, "I'll find Farris here."

"Farris is dead," said Collins.

"I didn't think you had the guts" said Lucinda Silone.

He turned his head against the roughness of the wall and he saw them now, standing to one side of him—Collins and Lucinda and Joe and two others that he did not know.

"He won't laugh again," said Blaine. "I smashed the laugh off him."

"Dead men never laugh," said Joe.

"I didn't hit him very hard."

"Hard enough."

"How do you know?"

"We made sure," said Lucinda.

HE REMEMBERED her from the morning, sitting across the desk from him, and the calmness of her. She still was clam. She was one, Blaine thought, who could make sure—very sure—that a man was dead.

It would not have been too hard to do. Blaine had been seen going over the wall and there would have been a chase. While the guard poured out after him it would have been a fairly simple matter to slip into the house and make entirely certain that Farris was dead.

He reached up a hand and felt the lump on his head, back of the ear. They had made certain of him, too, he thought

—certain that he would not wake too soon and that he'd make no trouble. He stumbled to his feet and stood shakily, putting out a hand against the wall to support himself.

He looked at Lucinda. "Education," he said, and he looked at Collins and said, "You too."

And he looked at the rest of them, from one to another. "And you?" he asked. "Every one of you?"

"Education has known it for a long time," Lucinda told him. "For a century or more. We've been working on you; and this time, my friend, we have Dreams nailed down."

"A conspiracy," said Blaine, grim laughter in his throat. "A wonderful combination—Education and conspiracy. And the Buttonholers. Oh, God, don't tell me the Buttonholers!"

SHE HELD her chin just a little tilted and her shoulders were straight. "Yes, the Buttonholers, too."

"Now," Blaine told her, "I've heard everything." He flicked a questioning thumb at Collins.

"A man," said the girl, "who took a Dream before we ever knew; who took you at the outward value that you give yourselves. We got to him..."

"Got to him!"

"Certainly. You don't think that we're without—well, you

might call them representatives, at Center."

"Spies."

"All right; call them spies."

"And I—where do I work in? Or did I just stumble in the way?"

"You in the way? Never! You were so conscientious, dear. So smug and self-satisfied, so idealistic."

So he'd not been entirely wrong, then. It *had* been an Education plot—except that the plot had run headlong into a Center intrigue and he'd been caught squarely in the middle. And, oh, the beauty of it, he thought—the utter, fouled-up beauty of it! You couldn't have worked a tangled mess like this up intentionally if you'd spent a lifetime at it.

"I told you pal," said Collins, "that there was something wrong. That the dream was made to order for a certain purpose."

Purpose, Blaine thought. The purpose of collecting data from hypothetical civilizations, from imaginary cultures, of having first-hand knowledge as to what would happen under many possible conditions; to collect and co-ordinate that data and pick from it the factors that could be grafted onto the present culture; to go about the construction of a culture in a cold-blooded, scientific manner, as a carpenter might set out to build a hen-coop. And the lumber and

the nails used in that hen-coop culture would have been fabricated from the stuff of dreams dreamt by reluctant dreamers.

AND THE purpose of Education in exposing the plot? Politics, perhaps. For the union which could unmask such duplicity would gain much in the way of public admiration, would thus be strengthened for the coming showdown. Or perhaps the purpose might be more idealistic, honestly motivated by a desire to thwart a scheme which would most surely put one union in unquestioned domination of all the rest of them.

"Now what" Blaine asked.

"They want me to bring a complaint," said Collins.

"And you are going to do it."

"I suppose I shall."

"But why you? Why now? There were others with substituted dreams; you were not the first. Education must have sleepers planted by the hundreds."

He looked at the girl. "You applied," he said; "you tried to plant yourself."

"Did I?" she asked.

And had she? Or had her application been aimed at him—for now it was clear that he had been selected as one weak link in Dreams. How many other weak links, now and in the past, had Education used? Had her application been a way to contact him, a means of applying

some oblique pressure to make him do a thing that Education might want someone like him to do?

"We are using Collins," said Lucinda, "because he is the first independent grade A specimen, we have found, who is untainted with the brush of Education espionage. We used our own sleepers to build up the evidence, but we could not produce in court evidence collected by admitted spies. But Collins is clean; he took the sleep before we even suspected what was going on."

"He is not the first; there have been others. Why haven't you used them?"

"They were not available."

"Not..."

"Dreams could tell what happened. Perhaps you might know what happened to them, Mr. Blaine."

HE SHOOK his head. "But why am I here? You certainly don't expect me to testify. What made you grab me off?"

"We saved your neck," said Collins; "you keep forgetting that."

"You may leave," Lucinda told him, "any time you wish."

"Except," Joe said, "you are a hunted man. The goons are looking for you."

"If I were you," said Collins, "I do believe I'd stay."

They thought they had him. He could see they thought so—had him tied and haltered, had him in a corner where he would have to do anything they said. A cold, hard anger grew inside of him—that anyone should think so easily to trap a man of Dreams and bend him to their will.

Norman Blaine took a slow step forward, away from the wall, and stood unsupported in the dim-lit cellar. "Which way out?" he asked.

"Up those steps," said Collins.

"Can you make it" Lucinda asked.

"I can make it."

He walked unsteadily toward the stairs, but each step seemed to be a little surer and he knew he'd make it, up the stairs and out into the coolness of the night. Suddenly he yearned for the first breath of the cool, night air, to be out of this dank hole that smelled of dark conspiracy.

He turned and faced them, where they stood like big-eyed ghosts against the cellar wall. "Thanks for everything," he said.

He stood there for another instant, looking back at them. "For everything," he repeated.

Then he turned and climbed the stairs.

XII

THE NIGHT was dark, though dawn could not be far off. The moon had set, but the stars burned like steady lamps and a furtive dawn-wind had come up to skitter down the street.

He was in a little village, Blaine saw—one of the many shopping centers scattered across the countryside, with its myriad shop fronts and their glowing night lights.

He walked away from the cellar opening, lifting his head so the wind could blow against it. The air was clean and fresh after the dankness of the cellar; he gulped in great breaths of it, and it seemed to clear his head of fog and put new strength into his legs.

The street was empty; he trudged along it, wondering what he should do next. Obviously, he had to do something. The move was up to him. He couldn't be found, come morning, still wandering the streets of this shopping center.

He must find some place to hide from the hunting goons!

But there was no way in which he could hide from them. They'd be relentless in their search for Blaine. He had killed their leader—or had seemed to kill him—and that was a precedent they could not allow to go unpunished.

THERE'D BE no public hue or outcry, for the Farris killing could not be advertised; but that would not mean the search would be carried on with any less ferocity. Even now they would be hunting for him, even now they would have covered all his likely haunts and contacts. He could not go home, or to Harriet's home, or to any of the other places—

Harriet's home!

Harriet was not home; she was off somewhere, tracking down a story that he must somehow stop. There was a greater factor here than his personal safety. There was the honor and the integrity of the Dream guild; if any of its honor or integrity were left.

But there was, Norman Blaine told himself. It still was left in the thousands of workers, and in the departmental heads who had never heard of substituted dreams. The basic purpose of the guild still remained what it had been for a thousand years, so far as the great majority of its members were concerned. To them the flame of service, the pride and comfort of that service, and the dedication to it burned as bright and clear as it ever had.

But not for long; not for many hours. The first headline in a paper, the first breath of whispered scandal, and the bright, clear light of purpose would be a smoky flare, glaring

redly in the murk of shame.

There was a way—there had to be a way—to stop it. There must be a way in which the Dream guild could be saved. And if there were a way, he must be the one to find it; of them all, Blaine was the only one who knew the imminence of dishonor.

THE FIRST step was to get hold of Harriet, to talk with her, to make her see the right and wrong.

The goons were hunting for him, but they would be on their own; they could not enlist the help of any other union. It should be safe to phone.

Far up the street, he saw a phone booth sign and he headed there, hurrying along, his footsteps ringing sharply in the morning chill.

He dialed the number of Harriet's office.

No, the voice said, she wasn't there. No, he had no idea. Should he have her call back if she happened to come in.

"Never mind," said Blaine.

He called another number.

"We're closed," a voice told him; "there's no one here at all."

He called another and there was no answer.

Another. "There ain't no one here, mister. We closed up hours ago. It's almost morning now."

She wasn't at her office; she

wasn't at her favorite night spots.

Home, perhaps?

He hesitated for a moment, then decided it wasn't safe to call her there. The goons in defiance of all Communications regulations, would have her home line tapped, and his home line as well.

THERE WAS that little place out by the lake where they'd gone one afternoon. *Just a chance*, he told himself.

He looked up the number, dialed it. "Sure she's here," said the man who answered.

He waited.

"Hello Norm," she said, and he could sense the panic in her voice the little quick catch in her breath.

"I have to talk with you."

"No" she said. "No. What do you mean by calling? You can't talk with me. The goons are hunting you..."

"I've got to talk to you; that story..."

"I've got the story, Norm."

"But you have to listen to me. The story's wrong. It's not the way you have it; that's not the way it was at all."

"You better get away, Norm. The goons are everywhere..."

"Damn the goons," he said.

"Goodbye, Norm" she said; "I hope you get away."

The line was dead.

He sat stunned staring at the phone.

I hope you get away. Good-bye, Norm. I hope you get away.

She had been frightened when he'd called. She wouldn't listen; she was sorry, now, that she had ever know him—a man disgraced, a killer, hunted by the goons.

She had the story she had told him; and that was all that mattered. A story wormed out of the whispered word, out of a gin and tonic or a Scotch and soda. The old, wise story garnered from many confidences, from knowing the right people, from having many pipelines.

"Ugly," he said.

So she had the story and would write it soon and it would be splashed in garish lettering for the world to read.

There must be a way to stop it—there had to be a way to stop it.

There was a way to stop it!

HE SHUT his eyes and shivered, suddenly cold with the horror. "No, no" he said.

But it was the only answer. Blaine got up, groped his way out of the booth, and stood in the loneliness of the empty sidewalk, with the splashes of light thrown across the concrete from the many shop fronts with the first dawn wind stirring in the sky above the roofs.

A car came creeping down the street, with its lights off,

and he did not see it until it was almost opposite him. The driver stuck out his head. "Ride, mister?"

He jumped, startled by the car and the voice. His muscles bunched but there was no place to go, no place to duck, nowhere to hide. They had him cold, he knew. He wondered why they didn't shoot.

The back door popped open. "Get in here," said Lucinda Silone. "Don't stand and argue. Get in, you crazy fool."

He moved swiftly leaped into the car and slammed the door.

"I couldn't leave you out there naked," said the girl. "The way you are, the goons would have you before the sun was up."

"I have to go to Center," Blaine told her. "Can you take me there?"

"Of all the places..."

"I have to go," he said; "if you won't take me..."

"We can take you."

"We can't take him and you know it," said the driver.

"Joe the man wants to go to Center."

"It's a stupid business," said Joe. "What does he want to go to Center for? We can hide him out. We..."

"They won't be looking for me there," said Blaine. "That's the last place in the world they'd expect to find me."

"You can't get in..."

"I can get him in" Lucinda said.

XIII

THEY CAME around a curve and were confronted by the road block. There was no time to stop, no room to turn around and flee. "Get down!" yelled Joe.

The motor howled in sudden fury at an accelerator jammed tight against the boards. Blaine reached out an arm and pulled Lucinda to him, hurling both of them off the seat and to the floor.

Metal screamed and grated as the car slammed into the block. Out of the corner of his eye, Norman Blaine saw timber go hurtling past the window. Something else smashed into a window and they were sprayed with glass.

The car bucked and slewed, then was through. One tire was flat, thumping and pounding on the pavement.

Blaine reached up a hand and grasped the back of the seat. He hauled himself up pulling Lucinda with him.

The hood of the machine, sprung loose, canted upward, blocking out the driver's vision of the road. The metal of the hood was twisted and battered, flapping in the wind. "Can't hold it long," Joe grunted, fighting the wheel.

He turned his head, a swift

glance back at them, then swung it back again. Half of Joe's face, Blaine saw, was covered with blood from a cut across the temple.

A shell exploded off to one side of them. Flying, jagged metal slammed into the careening car.

Hand mortars—and the next one would be closer!

"Jump!" yelled Joe.

Blaine hesitated, and a swift thought flashed in his mind. He couldn't jump; he couldn't leave this man alone—this Buttonholer by the name of Joe. He had to stick with him. After all, this was his fight much more than it was Joe's.

LUCINDA'S fingers bit into his arm. "The door!"

"But Joe..."

"The door!" she screamed at him.

Another shell exploded, in front of the car and slightly to one side. Blaine's hand found the button of the door and pressed. The door snapped open, retracting back into the body. He hurled himself at the opening.

His shoulder slammed into concrete and he skidded along it; then the concrete ended, and he fell into nothingness. He landed in water and thick mud and fought his way up out of it, sputtering and coughing, dripping slime and muck.

His head buzzed madly and

there was a dull ache in his neck. One shoulder, where he'd hit and skidded on the concrete, seemed to be on fire. He smelled the acrid odor of the muck, the mustiness of decaying vegetation, and the wind that blew down the roadside ditch was so cold it made him shiver.

Far up the road, another shell exploded, and in the flash of light he saw metallic objects flying out into the dark. Then a column of flame flared up and burned, like a lighted torch.

There went the car, he thought.

And there went Joe as well—the little man who'd waylaid him in the parking lot that morning, a little Buttonholer for whom he'd felt anger and disgust. But a man who'd died, who had been willing to die, for something that was bigger than himself.

Blaine floundered up the ditch, stooping low to keep in the cover of the reeds that grew along its edges. "Lucinda!"

THERE WAS a floundering in the water ahead. He wondered briefly at the thankfulness of relief that welled up inside of him.

She had made it, then; she was safe, here in the ditch—although to be in the ditch was only temporary safety. They might have been seen by the watching goons. They had to

get away, as swiftly as they could.

The flare of the burning car was dying down and the ditch was darker now. He floundered ahead, trying to be as quiet as possible.

She was waiting for him, crouched against the bank. "All right?" he whispered and she nodded at him, her face making the quick motion in the darkness.

She lifted an arm and pointed; there, seen through the tightgrowing reeds of the marsh beyond the ditch, was Center, a great building that towered against the first light of morning in the eastern sky. "We're almost there," she told him softly.

She led the way slowly along the ditch and off into the marsh, following a watery run-way that ran through the thick cover of sedges and rushes. "You know where you are going?"

"Just follow me," she told him.

He wondered vaguely how many others might have followed this hidden path across the marsh—how many times she herself might have followed it. Although it was hard to think of her as she was now, dirty with muck and slime, wading through the water. Behind them they still could hear the shouts of the squad of goons that had been stationed

at the block.

The goons had gone all out, he thought, setting up a block on a public highway. Someone could get into a lot of trouble for a stunt like that.

He'd told Lucinda that the goons would never dream of his going back to Center. But he had been wrong; apparently they had expected he'd try to make it back to Center. And they'd been set and waiting for him. Why?

LUCINDA had halted in front of the mouth of a three-foot drain pipe, emerging from the bank just above the waterway. A tiny trickle of water ran out of it and dripped into the swamp. "How are you at crawling?"

"I can do anything," he told her.

"It's a long ways."

He glanced up at the massive Center which, from where he stood, seemed to rise out of the marsh. "All the way?"

"All the way," she said.

She lifted a muddy hand and brushed back a strand of hair, leaving a streak of mud across her face. He grinned at the sight of her—sodden and bedraggled, no longer the cool, unruffled creature who had sat across the desk from him. "If you laugh out loud," she said, "I swear I'll smack you one."

She braced her elbows on the lip of the pipe and hauled her-

self upward, wriggling into the pipe. She gained the pipe and went forward on hands and knees.

Blaine followed. "You know your way around," he whispered, the pipe catching up the whisper and magnifying it, bouncing it back and forth in an eerie echo.

"We had to," we fought a vicious enemy."

They crawled and crept in silence, then, for what seemed half of eternity. "Here," said Lucinda. "Careful."

She reached back a hand and guided him forward in the darkness. A glow of feeble light came from a break in the side of the pipe, where a chunk of the tile had been broken or had fallen out. "Tight squeeze," she told him.

He watched her wriggle through and drop from sight.

Blaine followed cautiously. A broken spear of the tile bit into his back and ripped his shirt, but he forced his body through and dropped.

THEY STOOD in a dim-lit corridor. The air smelled foul and old; the stones dripped with dampness. They came to stairs and climbed them, went along another corridor for a ways, then climbed again.

Then, suddenly, there were no dripping stones and dankness, but a familiar hall of marble, with the first-floor

murals shining on the walls above the gleaming bronze of elevator doors.

There were robots in the hall; suddenly, the robots all were looking at them and starting to walk toward them.

Lucinda backed against the wall.

Blaine grabbed at her wrist.

"Quick," he said. "Back the way..."

"Blaine," said one of the advancing robots. "Wait a minute, Blaine."

He swung around and waited. all the robots stopped. "We've been waiting for you," said the robot spokesman. "We were sure you'd make it."

BLAINE jerked at Lucinda's wrist. "Wait," she whispered. "There's something going on here."

"Roemer said you would come back," the robot said. "He said that you would try."

"Roemer? What has Roemer got to do with it?"

"We are with you," said the robot. "We threw out all the goons. Please allow me, sir."

The doors of the nearest elevator were slowly sliding back.

"Let's go along," Lucinda said. "It sounds all right to me."

They stepped into the elevator, with the robot spokesman following.

The car shot up and stopped.

The door opened and they stepped out, between two solid lines of robots, flanking their path from the elevator to the door marked Records.

A man stood in the door, a great foursquare, dark-haired man whom Norman Blaine had seen before on a few occasions. A man who had written: *If you should want to see me later, I am at your service.*

"I heard about it, Blaine," said Roemer. "I hoped you'd try to make it back; I figured you were that kind of man."

Blaine stared back at him haggardly. "I'm glad you think so, Roemer. Five minutes from now..."

"It had to be someone," said Roemer. "Don't think about it too much. It simply had to come."

Blaine walked on leaden feet between the file of robots, brushed past Roemer at the door.

THE PHONE was on the desk and Norman Blaine lowered himself into the chair before it. Slowly he reached out his hand.

No! No! There must be another way. There must be another, better way to beat them—Harriet with her story; and the goons who were hunting him; and the plot with its roots reaching back through seven hundred years. Now he could make it stick—with

Roemer and the robots he could make it stick. When he'd first thought of it, he had not been sure he could. His only thought then, he remembered, had been to get back to Center somehow, to get into this office and try to hold the place long enough, so he could not be stopped from doing what he meant to do.

He had expected to die here, behind some desk or chair, with a goon bullet in his body, and a shattered door through which the goons had finally burst their way.

There had to be another way—but there was no other way. There was only one way—the bitter fruit of seven hundred years of sitting quietly in the corner, with hands folded in one's lap, and poison in one's brain. He lifted the receiver out of the cradle and held it there, looking across the desk at Roemer.

"How did you do it?" he asked. "These robots? Why did you do it, John?"

"Giesey's dead," said Roemer; "so is Farris. No one has been appointed to their posts. Chain of command, my friend. Business agent, Protection, Records—you're the big boss now; you've been the head of Dreams since the moment Farris died."

"Oh, my God," said Blaine.

"The robots are loyal," Roemer went on. "Not to any man; not to any one depart-

ment. They are conditioned to be loyal to Dreams. And you, my friend, are Dreams. For how long, I don't know; but at the moment you are Dreams."

THEY STARED at one another for a long moment.

"The authority is yours," said Roemer; "go ahead and make your call."

So that was why, Blaine thought, the goons assumed I would return. That was why they'd set up the road block, not on one road only, perhaps, but on all of them—so that he could not get back and take over before someone could be named.

I should have thought of it, he told himself, I knew it. I thought of it this very afternoon, how I was third in line—

The operator was saying: "Number, please. Number, please. What number do you wish, please."

Blaine gave the number and waited.

Lucinda had laughed at him and said: "You are a dedicated man." Perhaps not those words exactly but that had been what she meant. Mocking him with his dedication; prodding him to see what he would do. A dedicated man, she'd said. And now, here finally, was the price of dedication.

"News" said a voice. "This is Central News."

"I have a story for you."

"Who is speaking, please?"

"Norman Blaine. I am Blaine, of Dreams."

"Blaine?" A pause. "You said your name was Blaine?"

"That's right."

"We have a story here," said Central News, "from one of our branches. We've been checking it. We held it up, in fact, to check it..."

"Put me on transcription. I want you to get this right; I don't want to be misquoted."

"You're on transcription sir."

"Then here you are..."

Then here you are.

Here is the end of it—

"Go ahead, Blaine."

BLAINE said, "Here it is, then. For seven hundred years, the Dreams guild has been carrying out a series of experiments aimed at the study of parallel cultures..."

"That is what the story we have says, sir; you are sure that that is right?"

"You disbelieve it?"

"No, but..."

"It's true. We've worked on it for seven hundred years—under strict security because of certain continuing situations which made it seem unwise to say anything about it..."

"The story I have here..."

"Forget the story that you have!" Blaine shouted. "I don't know what it's all about; I called you up to tell you that

[Turn to page 126]

ONE SMALL ROOM

by Thomas N. Scortia

Rhinneson faced a problem as old as man, and as new as spaceflight. And before him was the inevitable question -- why?

RHINNESON felt a taut panic suddenly constrict his throat. His eyes shifted from the two uniformed figures in the road to the glowing clock on the dash of the convertible.

"H" Hour minus ten minutes.

"Sorry, Major," the SFC said, "this is a restricted pass."

Rhinneson felt the alcoholic weakness invade his thighs and arms. His foot pressed heavily against the brake pedal; he could feel the muted throb of the motor through the leather.

"Damn it, the pass is all right," he told the sergeant. The corporal flashed a light on his left pocket. The celloid portrait badge pinned to the tropical worsted uniform glinted like metal.

"Neal I. Rhinneson, Major, USAF," the corporal read.

"That's right."

The light flashed in his eyes, blinding him for a second.

Silently he cursed himself. He should have known they would have a block on the road.

"That pass won't get you into Demeter area," the sergeant said. "Not tonight, Major."

The man paused in thought. "You'd better dismount," he said at last, "while I check you out with Desert Rock Able."

HE GESTURED at the leather-cased field phone lying in the circle of white light from a sputtering gasoline lantern. Black wires snaked from the phone into the desert blackness beyond the light.

"Like hell," Rhinneson said. He toed the accelerator and the tires spit sand. The bumpers smashed against the wooden horse that blocked the road. He heard a shot behind him and mashed the accelerator to the mat. The second shot cobwebbed the windshield to his right in a sparkling foot-wide circle.

The wind whipped past his face and he felt the blue service cap pull from his head. In the mirror he saw the gelatinous darkness swallow the blob of

illustrated by
EMSH



white light that marked the road block.

The twin cones of the headlights speared through the thick night, dancing wildly with each bump in the road. He glanced at the dash clock quickly, then leaned forward, trying to distinguish the road from the dirty yellow sand on either side.

"H" minus nine.

The convertible struck a deep rut and alcohol sloshed sickingly in his stomach. He opened his mouth and gulped in the cold night air.

Nine minutes more.

They've finished the fueling now, he thought.

HE COULD see in his mind's eye the fueling booms, stretched like steel cobwebs against the sky. They were moving back from the gleaming torpedo shape; nine minutes from now, the charge of liquid methane they'd delivered would jet in fantastic incandescence from the reactor chambers.

And the Old Man would stand there in the desert chill, watching, his lean shoulders square and erect, his face rigid and proud, hiding the ache of his disappointment.

The wheel writhed suddenly under Rhinneson's hands; he grabbed for it and fought the road. He was going too fast. He knew that. He thought of the gullies and washouts that could

throw a car from the road at this speed.

But an inner voice said, "*Faster, faster.*"

And a calm, distant part of him remembered that time when the Old Man brought the two inch refractor back from New York. (The Old Man was only Captain Rhinneson, then—not Colonel Rhinneson—and he was teaching freshman physics at the Academy, not building moon rockets.)

They'd dug the brass tips of the tripod into the soft dirt beside the house. When the last Army brat from the neighboring houses had lost interest and disappeared into the dusk, he and the Old Man stood, bending over the objective and looking far out into the black gulfs.

"There she is, son," the Old Man said. "Tycho, Mare Nubium; why I know her like the back of my hand."

And he stood, watching the blue-white disk drift across the field into the star-flecked black, feeling an alien sensation like reaching out far beyond his own immediate physical limits.

"That's the Big Jump," The Old Man's voice was husky in the moon-splotched darkness of the yard, "and after that, the whole system with earth as a footstool."

SHORTLY thereafter, they'd gone to bed and the next

evening the Old Man gave him the copy of Wolfe's *The Web and the Rock*, (Funny, he had yet to read the whole book.), with that one passage in the prologue lined in heavy ink, the one that started:

"Did we need the earth that we were never still upon it? Whoever needs the earth shall have the earth, he shall be still upon it..."

Opposite this the Old Man had printed in his precise hand: "*And what of the rest of us, those of us who want more?*"

Rhinneson twisted the steering wheel to avoid a shadowed depression that loomed suddenly before the wheels. *I can almost draw a line at that point*, he thought. *That was the beginning.*

He had known instinctively that he would be on the Big Jump. He had gone to the Academy at Colorado Springs with that one thought in mind. In the years of desire and the growth of longing, he had never questioned the source of the dream or the reason behind the need, until...

"NEAL, CAN'T you see what he's done?" Ginny's voice was shrill with an empty desperation.

"Can't you see what he's done. From the very first moment, he's staged a carefully

dramatised play for your benefit— just to trap you in the same idea that has warped his life."

Rhinneson looked out of the window, past the tall neon-lighted pylon that said "Hotel Deseret" to the white ribbon of the Strip. He followed it eastward to the glow of Las Vegas that crouched on the tips of the Joshua trees that fronted the hotel.

"He knew he'd be too old for the moon flight," she continued, "so he set out deliberately to give you his ideals, his desires. He's planned it for years. He can't go but his son must."

"Do you think you're telling me something I don't know?"

"Do you know? Can you separate the fantasy from the reality?"

"That's not important."

"Is throwing your life away important?"

"Damn it," he said, "you can't live forever in a safe warm world. I've lived my whole life for Demeter; even if the odds against her making it were worse, I'd go. Don't you understand? I'd have to."

HE TURNED from the window and placed his hands carefully on her shoulders. For silent moments he looked into the smoky green depths of her eyes. "When we were first married, you knew where all this was leading."

"I thought I did," she said. "You know I've never felt it the way you do."

"That's just it; my whole life has been channelized to this one end. Without tomorrow night, everything I've done is meaningless."

"Is your coming child meaningless too?"

"Dad said this was something a woman couldn't understand."

"Yes, I know," she said. " 'Brave Men to the Stars.' "

When she saw the anger in his face, Ginny said, "Oh, Neal, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be cruel."

"Didn't you?"

As he pulled on his service cap, she said, "I thought we were going out." She smiled uncertainly. "First night in Vegas, you know."

"I'm due back early. Briefing early tomorrow morning. I'll see you before noon."

He left her sitting on the bed. The door closed, hiding the tired defeat in her eyes.

He drove the long drive back to Desert Rock with the top down, feeling the chill air stab through his thin summer uniform. He felt quite cold—not entirely from the wind, he realized.

KARP AND NIPPER, who were to be his copilot and engineer, were in the Old Man's office at 8:00 A. M. when

Rhinneson reported for the briefing. MacDougal and Waslov, the alternates, showed up shortly thereafter.

When the Old Man arrived, he spoke earnestly for some moments, reviewing the details of the launching, and then rose in dismissal. "Final check-out at 2000 hours tonight, gentleman. 'H' Hour is 2215 by our latest calculations."

As the others filed out, he motioned for Rhinneson to stay. After the door had closed, he asked, "How did she take it, Neal?"

"You were right," Rhinneson admitted. "I shouldn't have let her come out this late in the game."

"Nonsense. Women in her condition are always uncertain and demanding." He walked around the desk and placed a hand on Rhinneson's shoulder. "That coming son will be proud of you."

The shaggy grey brows frowned for a moment. "Just as I am," the Old Man added.

"You're the one who should be going," Rhinneson said.

"I am. By proxy."

Rhinneson tried to express the way he felt but he looked at his father and there was simply nothing that could be put into words. Only, "I'm glad I'm going."

"So am I," the Old Man said.

HE ARRIVED at the Hotel just before noon. He called Ginny from the lobby phone and told her that he would meet her in the bar. Then he walked from the lobby, through the gaming room, detouring around the shrouded roulette table and the crap table, where a few players were rolling dice in an apathetic manner.

The bar was on a curved dais at the far end of a long row of dollar slot machines and separated from the dining room by a shadow box partition. Seeing that there were only a few tables still empty in the dining room, Rhinneson signaled the maitre and reserved a table near the wall.

He chose a chrome and plastic stool at the bar and ordered a bourbon and water. While the bartender mixed his drink, he looked through the many-paned window that backed the bar to the kidney-shaped pool outside. He was idly counting the number of ubiquitous Joshua trees ringing the pool when the bartender returned. "Nice day for a swim," Rhinneson said.

"Yeah." The man wiped at a puddle on the bar. "You one of the Demeter boys, Major?"

Rhinneson twirled the glass in his hand. "Where did you hear that word?"

"Try and keep security around here!" The bartender laughed. "Everybody's been

wondering what's up out there in the flats since the last A-shot—especially after they struck water and started to put up those permanent buildings. Then after that explosion last year, the word got around that they were working with atoms again. Only this time it was rockets."

"Could be a desert testing station." "Yeah," the bartender leaned over the bar. "Tell me, why do you guys want to go to the moon?"

"What do you mean? Who told you that?"

"I don't mean you personally or the government," the man said. "I mean the guys who are actually going. Why risk your neck for a ball of dirt? Not even any air, they tell me."

Rhinneson fumbled for a cigaret and watched the man strike a match and extend it. "I don't know. Maybe it's just something they have to do."

"Sounds crazy to me," the other man said and moved away to serve a new customer at the far end of the bar.

RHINNESON thought: *How do you answer a question like that? Why do you want to go to the moon?... Who was it who said, "We'll tell you when we get there?"... No, that's not satisfactory. At least, it's no explanation for the intuitive conviction that it simply has to be done... Challenge?*

... Adventure?... Something else. Something more.

He drained his glass and sat, looking at the wet ring the drink had left on the bar. *No, that's the only answer that I can give you, friend. It's just something that you've got to do... like breathing or eating or thinking. If you don't understand that, there's no point in talking about it further.*

When he saw Ginny enter the far end of the gaming room, he found some change in his pocket, left a tip on the bar, and walked to meet her. Throughout the meal she was very quiet, scarcely speaking, and then only in a low voice that was difficult to hear above the noise of the other diners. Finally, over coffee he suggested that they go for a drive and she said, "No, let's go upstairs."

"Anything wrong?"

SHE ROSE without answering. Rhinneson paid the check and followed her to the elevator in the lobby. As they entered her room and he closed the door, he saw that her two bags were on the luggage rack.

"What's up?" he said, though he knew her answer before she spoke.

"I'm taking the two o'clock plane out," she said.

"For good?"

"For good," she said.

He stood silently, feeling all arms and legs and shapeless

muscle, not knowing what to say.

"I can't go on this way," Ginny said. "It was bad enough in Japan when the Korean War broke out."

"You could have left." He searched for something, to say, no matter how irrelevant.

"Every day, when you left the house, I felt as if you were taking a part of my life with you."

She sat down wearily on the bed. "Off to war in the morning and back to the faithful wife at night."

"Well, it was a screwy kind of war."

"I can't go through with that again," she said. "Even if I weren't going to have your child, I'd feel the same."

"This isn't the same thing; this is the Big Jump."

"**YOU** KNOW that this won't be the last one," she said. "There'll be another and another; and then one day you won't come back. I want a home, and stability, and the knowledge that my husband will be alive tomorrow."

"Don't you think I want the same things?"

"No. You're blinded by the fantasies your father has planted in you." Her voice was harsh and bitter then. "What did they ever get him, these high and mighty ideals? He preached jets and rockets and they held him

back; his classmates are generals now. And when the British beat us to jets, and the Germans built V-2, did they remember?"

"It was enough satisfaction to the Old Man that they picked him for Demeter."

"Satisfaction?" Ginny said wonderingly. "He's pushed you to this moment almost from the cradle. What does he care about the risk, about the chance that this rocket will fail the way the robot one did last year?"

"You know that was a fluke. We've learned how to damp the pile since then, how to keep the energy release below the critical level."

"Oh, yes, you know so much. You and him, you're satisfied. Well, you've got your pretty rocket now; and if it doesn't work, you'll still go out in a blaze of glory."

Rhinneson tried to ignore the bitterness in her voice. "Demeter will make it. Demeter has to."

"It's as simple as that to you," she said. "It has to. And what happens to you and to me and to your child if it doesn't?"

In the end, it was no use. He felt as if he were wading through thick molasses. All the while he was calling Demeter Area, he thought, *And the horrible thing is that I'm doing this because I love her.*

And the very act is destroying everything I felt for her.

AFTER HE had told the Old Man, he said "I'm sorry."

"That's a small word," the Old Man replied.

"I'll be in to brief Mac-Dougal."

"No," the phone said. "I think it's better that you stay where you are."

"But..."

"Tomorrow we'll talk about another assignment. There's a flight levy for Spain."

"I don't want another assignment."

"I think that's the best thing for the service," the Old Man said and the receiver clicked in Rhinneson's ear.

After he had replaced the phone, he sat on the bed, staring at the wall and dissecting the irregularities in the plaster, thinking, *Whoever wants the earth shall have the earth... He shall rest within a small place...*

And he saw at that moment that the smallness Wolfe had written of was not merely a physical thing, that with this action he had cut himself apart from the race and from everything that Demeter Project would mean to the race for centuries to come. From this point within the small chamber of his mind, he was forever imprisoned with doubt and with the deep agony of regret. Whether Demeter succeeded or failed, he had already betrayed the ideals that made her.

He watched Ginny begin to unpack her bags and he wondered what must be going on behind her cold face.

Satisfaction?

A feeling of triumph?

Finally he said, "The Old Man said something about a tour at one of the Spanish bases."

"I understand that's a good assignment."

"Yes."

Rhinneson turned and lay down across the bed. He had no particular interest in talking; he was conscious that she had chosen a chair near the window. He felt her eyes, staring at him with a fixed intensity.

HE MUST have dozed, for when he was next conscious of the chair beside the window, he realized that she was gone. As he fumbled for a cigaret from the pack on the phone table, the door opened and Ginny entered. "I went for a walk. I stopped at the desk and reserved a table for dinner."

"I'm not hungry," he said, getting to his feet.

"You'll forget all this in time."

"Will I?" He threw the cigaret on the floor and ground it under his heel. He picked his hat from the table and turned. For a long time, he stood, just staring at her in silence. Then he turned and walked through

the door, closing it softly behind him.

Downstairs, he stopped by a slot machine and placed a dollar piece in the slot. The dial registered one lemon, one cherry, and a bar. His watch told him that it was already 6:15. He made his way to the bar and sat down, deciding that he would get quite drunk.

After the fifth bourbon and soda, he began to develop a tight nausea in the pit of his stomach. He sat, thinking that he shouldn't be there, that there was something vastly important that he had forgotten.

THE BARTENDER of the previous night approached him and Rhinneson said; "I shouldn't be here."

"That so" the man asked in a bored voice.

"I have an . . . appointment." He laughed and flicked the glass before him with a fingernail. "Had it for years."

"Must be important," the bartender said.

"It was."

He turned on the stool to watch the crowd around the dice tables. A fiftyish woman, her thinning grey hair clipped in a mannish Italian style, was persistently throwing snake eyes. She lost nearly a thousand dollars as he watched.

His eyes traveled down the gaming tables, eying the intense faces that hovered like white

balloons over the green felt tables. Suddenly he felt the appalling uselessness of what they were doing. He saw the wide, fevered eyes hungry for the vicarious victories of the tables, searching for the meaning of their lives in a pair of spotted cubes.

He threw money to the bar and half-stumbled from the floor. He made his way upstairs and pushed into the room.

Ginny sat up as he came in, and he said, "Lie down; I'm not coming to bed yet."

HE SAT in the chair by the window, feeling her tired eyes upon him. He looked out across the nimbus of light from the hotel, past the rainbow glow that was Las Vegas, and wondered why he felt so horribly empty and alone. His whole life had led to this instant and now, after this one moment, there was nothing.

He heard the groan of the bed and the strike and flare of a match and the smell of cigaret smoke, but he didn't turn.

What if it had been all a part of a campaign by the Old Man? The campaign had so conditioned his every thought that the empty longing that suffused his every fiber could not be denied.

"Neal," she said.

"What is it?"

She exhaled blue smoke and

watched it roll like a solid mass over the bed and onto the floor. "Does it mean that much?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes, it does."

"If it hadn't been for the baby, would you have gone?"

He paused, wondering, *Do I want to hurt her?* Finally he said, "Yes."

She nodded tiredly.

"You'd better go," she said, "while there's still time."

As he wheeled the convertible past the front of the hotel, his eyes found the lighted window on the second floor. He could see Ginny, silhouetted against the yellow glow of the room. She stood without moving. He turned onto the strip and gunned the motor.

It was "H" Hour minus thirty minutes when he took the dirt cutoff from the main road that led to Camp Desert Rock and headed for Demeter Area. He had forgotten that there would be an MP checkpoint on the road until his headlights outlined the two gesturing figures in front of the wooden horse roadblock...

"H" MINUS five.

He counted the seconds in his mind as he tried to coax more speed from the laboring motor. The steering column vibrated as the car struck a corduroyed section of the road. The headlights veered wildly

and Rhinneson curled his fingers tightly around the sweaty plastic of the wheel.

"H" minus three.

Somewhere ahead the great taut shape of the ship, its silver skin gleaming over sinews of steel and titanium, waited for the last small group of men to withdraw to the firing bunker, waited for the moment when flame would blossom from its jets and hurl it toward the stars.

Rhinneson did not see the bend in the road until he was upon it. In the sudden panic, a part of his mind became coldly analytical. He saw that he could not make the curve; he straightened the wheel with one hand and cut the ignition with the other.

The car left the road, its wheels churning a storm of sand under the fenders. For a moment he thought the machine might maintain its forward path until it lost speed.

Then the steering wheel pulled his hand and he was turning in mid-air with an agonizing slowness and grace.

He had time to note how his arms and legs flailed the air, how the rolling mass of the convertible followed him. Then the ground rushed up and slammed him in the back.

IN THE next instant the car was upon him. He saw the

dark frame settle over him. The spinning blots of its wheels missed his head by inches. Something heavy pounded his right leg into the unyielding sand as his ears filled with the tearing of metal.

The car bounced, settled again on its springs, and was still.

He was amazed that he felt no pain. He tried to move, but his lower legs were pinned under the wreck. There was a loud ringing in his ears and a shocked numbness in his extremities.

But no pain.

As he tried again to rise to his elbows, a red glow blossomed on the horizon. It brightened and became a fantastic white. Then something traced a flaming streak from the ground.

The streak mounted slowly, then faster and faster, leaving a misty blue glow etched against the night sky. For an instant the streak was swallowed by the black air far above.

When it came, the flash of the detonation was little dimmed by the distance they must have ascended. There was no sound however; they were too far up for that.

He must have screamed and cried at that point. He felt sound rasping from his throat. The merciful numbness of his legs dissolved and an unbear-

able agony flooded his brain, smothering consciousness in a frightening blanket of red.

WHEN HE awoke, the first thing that he saw was that he was in a white room and then he saw the shape of the Old Man beside the bed.

"How do you feel?" his father asked.

"Rotten," Rhinneson said. He tried to grin but he found that he couldn't.

"Why did you do it?"

"You know."

"I suppose so."

"They didn't make it," Rhinneson said.

"No."

"I saw," Rhinneson said.

"We've got to make it, you know," the Old Man said. "Eventually we have to."

"Eventually."

Rhinneson tried to sit up. Pain washed over him, leaving him weak and shaking. His right leg was tingling and throbbing. The toes felt as if they were on fire. He rose on one elbow and looked down to where the rumpled sheets outlined the contours of his left leg. They spread out limply, hugging the plane of the mattress where his right leg should have been.

"It couldn't be helped," the Old Man said.

"I guess it's better than bleeding to death."

He looked at the pain in the

Old Man's face and was ashamed of himself. "Crank me up," he said.

THE OLD MAN stooped in front of the bed and worked the crank. The steel casement window slowly rose into view, revealing the first shallow glow of dawn on the edge of the desert. "They do wonderful things with prosthetics these days."

"I'll get along," Rhinneson said as the Old Man walked to the door.

"Get some sleep." the Old Man said.

"You too." Rhinneson watched the white door close on the tired shoulders that were no longer strong and erect.

He lay, looking out onto the desert. He thought of the blackened melted spot somewhere out there in the sand where three men had for an instant leaped into the unknown.

Leaped out to perish like blind moths before the careless flame of a candle.

"*Did we need the earth that we were never still upon it?*" Wolfe's words echoed in his mind.

"And what of the rest of us?" the Old Man had once asked.

Those three, Nipper, Karp, MacDougal, they'd found one answer to that question.

But not Rhinneson. His answer, his reason for living had expired in that instant of pain and white incandescence. Without the ship, without his leg, there was no purpose left—only the endless, empty years...

Useless moth, whose wings have extinguished the flame...

"Whoever needs the earth shall have the earth..."
(Bound eternally to a safe small speck of dirt...)

"He shall be still upon it..."
(Laying silently in a white bed, looking out over the empty desert...)

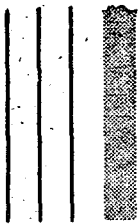
"He shall rest in a small place... he shall dwell in one small room forever."

His eyes found an antiseptic white wall, turned and found another. He felt the pressure of the fourth behind him. A tiny knot of dread formed in his stomach.

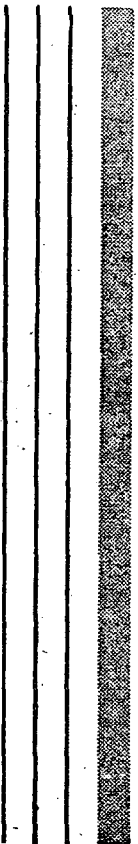
Then he looked out of the window again, conscious of the closing pressure of the walls around him, and thought of Ginny in town.

Ginny and the new life growing within her.

His voice was loud in the silence. The words echoed from the white walls of the small room. "It's got to be a son," he said. "It's got to be a son."



The traditional "mad scientist" has long been a stock figure in the most juvenile examples of science fiction—as evinced by the picture you see here. But weren't there some genuine loonies in the history of science? Yes, there were—as de Camp relates. Only they didn't behave like the popular cartoons of them!

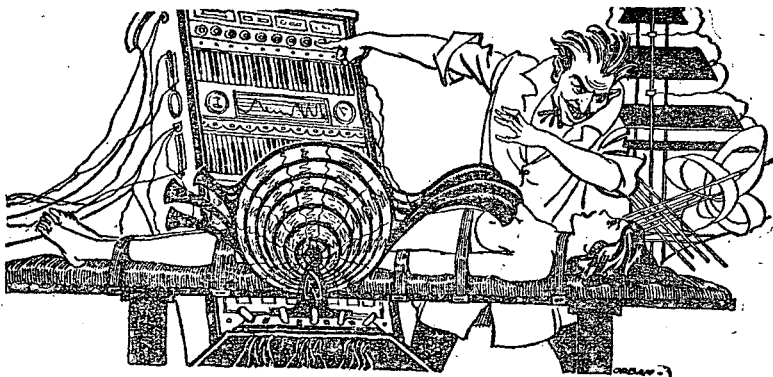


Mad Men Of Science

Special Feature

by L. Sprague de Camp

illustrated by Orban



This is the "Mad Scientist" you find in fiction.

"With a fiendish cackle, Professor Brutus Bastitch leaned over his keyboard. His eyes swept the nude form of Charity Darling, lingering lasciviously on the places where her firm pink flesh bulged between the bonds that held her to the hellish device.

"When I press this first button," he leered, "the machine will turn you into a warthog. When I press the second, the zoocidal rays from the tower will wipe out all life on earth. Except us, of course. And when I press the third—his eyes gleamed with fanatical eagerness—"the universe will blow up!"

"But why?" moaned Charity. "What has the universe done?"

"Because I'm mad! mad!" shrieked the inventor. "That's all the reason I need!" His finger trembled on the first button, when a section of the

wall fell down and there stood Victor Strong, infra-blasters in hand..."

THE SORT of scene just described was common in science fiction twenty years ago. Now we seldom read anything so crude. In a modern tale, Victor, instead of blowing Professor Bastitch's head off, would unfold a portable analyst's couch and plunk the professor down upon it. He would then establish that the poor fellow merely suffered from insecurity and frustration because he grew up in an orphanage.

Perhaps this is an improvement.

But as the term "mad scientist" is still a cliché of science fiction, I thought you might like to read about some real scientists who were mad, or at least pretty queer. What about the real article? Do they tend

to be madder than other people? Are their aberrations the same as those of others, or have they their own distinctive lunacies?

The first trouble we run into is lack of information. Many mad scientists cut their capers long ago, whereas the science of psychopathology and the art of psychiatry have only come of age in the last half-century. So, even when I can learn a lot about an eccentric eighteenth-century scientist, I can only tell what he did and guess at the cause. Even when the scientist is modern enough to have competent head-shrinking treatment, the public details are sparse. Understandably, his admiring biographer and his relatives are not eager to tell of every twitch, fit, and delusion.

Still, there are enough biographies of scientists to make a rough first approximation of a psychiatric diagnosis.

ANOTHER difficulty with mad scientists is that they, more than most people, suffer from relativity—that is, opinions and conduct considered mad at one time may be sane in another. The scientist is often ahead of his time in beliefs and practices and therefore liable to be deemed mad by contemporaries. One unlucky Frenchman was put in the madhouse in the 1640's for insist-

ing that boats could be driven by steam. (In this article I include inventors as "scientists", though many lacked any formal technical training.) James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, an eminent eighteenth-century Scottish judge and anthropologist, was thought mad by such contemporaries as Dr. Samuel Johnson. While Lord Monboddo does seem to have been eccentric, the main reason he was thought crazy was his idea that men were descended from apes.

So we must be careful before we take a man's opinion as evidence of insanity, since the delusion of one age may become the premature scientific insight of another. It does not always follow, of course. If Oscar Zilch thought he was Napoleon, in 1900, the passage of years will never reveal that he really was Napoleon. And for every such radical view that later became scientific orthodoxy, many others not only seemed mistaken at the time but have been proven wrong, and have remained mistaken ever since.

THE FACT that a man is a scientist is no assurance against his accepting false or unsound ideas. Perhaps scientists ought not to do so, but they do. A quality needed for scientific discoveries is an open mind—open enough to weigh a new idea on its merits instead of brusquely dismissing it. But

this virtue, like others, can be carried to a fault. Some men have minds that are not merely open but gaping—admitting all new ideas, good, bad, and indifferent. Alfred Russell Wallace, Darwin's co-discoverer of evolution, had this kind of gaping mind. It swallowed Richard Owen's utopian socialism, phrenology, almanacal weather-forecasting, the Single Tax, and Spiritualist mediumship with the same indiscriminate enthusiasm.

Oliver Lodge, like Wallace, fell for Spiritualism—and not even on so meagerly scientific a basis as that on which Dr. Rhine basis his belief in ESP. Lodge was taken in by demonstrations by mediums which had been exposed as patent frauds. I told in an earlier article about C. Piazzzi Smyth's Pyramidology. William Herschel, the astronomer, insisted that the sun had a cool and even a habitable surface under its blazing atmosphere, Ernst Mach (1838-1916), the great Austrian physicist for whom the Mach-number of aerodynamics is named, refused to the end of his days to believe in atoms.

In addition, being mostly men of introverted, cerebrotonic, schizoidal, inner-directed personalities (the term depends on which psychologist you favor, but they all refer to

the same kind of man) scientists tend, once they have chosen a course that seems reasonable, to stick to it stubbornly, and ignore the jeers of others, believing that "a hundred years after he is dead and forgotten, men who have never heard of him will be moving to the measure of his thought—the subtle rapture of a postponed power, which the world knows not because it has no external trappings, but which to his prophetic vision is more real than that which commands an army."*

Sometimes it works out that way and sometimes not. The only way to find out is to wait a hundred years and see.

BEING such men, scientists sometimes adopt ways of acting, dressing, and living that seems odd or unconventional to their fellows. Benjamin Franklin, one of the sanest men who ever lived, experimented with nudism—in private, but this was still unconventional enough in the century of powdered wigs and yearly baths. Usually the scientist has what he deems good reasons for his behavior and therefore persists in it, where a more conventional or other-directed man, even if he

*Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: "The Profession of Law" (lecture delivered in 1886 at Harvard University).

admitted the theoretical advantages of this radical usage, would eschew it for fear of his neighbors' opinions. Albert Einstein did not like to wear ties and socks, so he simply didn't wear ties and socks. Henry Fairfield Osborn, the paleontologist, and Henry Augustus Rowland, the physicist, were considered pompous and self-conceited because both had a pretty accurate knowledge of their own scientific preeminence and no false modesty about discussing it; in an age wherein such candid self-appreciation was unconventional.

Rowland was a tall, hatchet-faced man with an expression like an angry stork and a talent for outraging his hearers. In the 1890's he sued the Niagara Power and Construction Company because they objected to the fee he demanded for advising them to build their plant at Niagara Falls to generate alternating, instead of direct current. When asked during the trial: "Who, in your opinion, is the greatest physicist in the United States?" he replied: "I am."

When taxed with this answer later, Rowland said he been under oath to tell the truth, hadn't he?

AS FOR Osborn, it is said he once met a couple of undergraduates at Woods Hole

or some such scientific institution. Beaming benevolently, he said: "When I was a young man, I studied in England. There I saw Huxley and was profoundly impressed. Now you young men can see me!"

But nobody ever claimed that either man was—the least bit cracked; mere nonconformity cannot be deemed evidence of psychosis, neurosis, or any other mental defect.* Such a standard would exclude from the class of "normals" nearly everybody who has made a creative contribution to culture—who are non-standard simply by being in a minority, just as are red-haired people and those who can wiggle their ears.

After all, everybody must constantly choose between doing what he happens to want (whether that be advancing a radical theory, growing a beard,

*In 19th-century psychology, a "neurosis" was a disturbance of the nervous system while a "psychosis" was a disturbance of the mind, the two being considered different things. Now that most psychologists are philosophical monists, "neurosis" is used to mean a minor mental disturbance that leaves the victim able to carry on his affairs, while a "psychosis" is one severe enough to prevent him from doing so. There are other definitions, but these will do.

or punching a cop) and following convention. People who *always* follow convention are probably in a minority themselves, even in this conformist age. I suspect that they are victims of a phobia, exaggerated fear of opinion. We might call it pollophobia, "fear of the many."

In many matters indeed you cannot follow *the* convention, because society has two or more mutually exclusive conventions to choose from. For instance in the twentieth-century United States, one moiety of the people admires a neatly-kept house and regards a sloppy house with horror, while the other moiety is tense and uncomfortable in a neat house but enjoys a disorderly one. Likewise with the subject of male chastity. I believe it was Publius Syrus in the first century B.C. who said: "It is very hard to please everybody."

AS YOU ARE perhaps tired of hearing, scientists display the same range of virtues, vices, attributes, and personality-types as most people, except that you never find a really stupid scientist, and they do tend towards certain personality-types. It is not surprising to find a range of mental aberrations much like those of other people, except that the insanities are weighted towards

those kinds that develop out of the characteristic scientific personality-patterns, carried to extremes.

I know of no usable statistics showing whether scientists tend to go haywire more often than non-scientists, but the literature of scientific biography gives the impression that on the average they are *less* liable to such disturbances than most people. One reason, I suspect, is that the training needed to become a worthwhile scientist is so long and rigorous that a man with an outstanding defect of mind or personality is most likely to be weeded out before he can practice his profession. This statement, however, applies to pure scientists, not to inventors—who seem to have a rather high incidence of mental ills. But then, inventors of the amateur of garret-genius type are not screened by any such training as professional science and engineering now entail.

AMONG the varieties of mental disturbance, scientists have all the kinds that afflict others, except feeble-mindedness. Most of these kinds seem to have no special connection with the profession of science.

For instance in aging, a man's brain may give out sooner than his other organs, so that he ends his days in semile demen-

tia. John James Audubon* the ornithologist (1785-1851) sank into senile dementia at sixty-two and spent his last three years in that dreamy, childish condition. A formerly brilliant chemical engineer of my acquaintance, who has achieved success as a writer and business executive as well, has regressed in senility to spending his days reading comic-books.

Occasionally a scientist, like other people, becomes the victim of sexual disturbances. The little information available suggests that scientists are, if anything, less liable to these aberrations than most people—bearing in mind Kinsey's discovery that male homosexuality, at least in the form of an occasional early experience, is much commoner than anybody had supposed, and the line between male homo- and heterosexuals is less clear than was thought. Homosexuals themselves have at times tried to salve their vanity by claiming that their peculiarity tended to go with genius. But at least in science, the only important scientist of whom this is known, as far as I know, was Alexander

von Humboldt, with Leonardo da Vinci as a strong suspect. (Ancient Greeks don't count, as this behavior was conventional with them.) Recently a well-known astronomer was arrested for sending obscene letters to adolescent girls, and the last I heard he was under psychiatric treatment.

ONE PATTERN appears quite often among scientists: The shy, withdrawn man either too absorbed in his ideas, too timid socially, or too tepid in his sexual urges to pursue any line of sexual enterprise to success. He never marries, and spends his life in near or complete chastity. Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, J. Willard Gibbs, and Samuel Pierpont Langley seem to have been of this type.

On the other hand, of those who do marry, most are excellent marital risks: sober, faithful, trustworthy, sensible, and solvent, if perhaps sometimes lacking in familiar warmth. There is a distinction here among different kinds of scientists. Among those investigated by Dr. Ann Rose for her *The Making of a Scientist* (Dodd, Mead, 1953) physical scientists proved phenomenally successful as husbands, with only 5% of divorces. Biological scientist, with 15%, were still much better than the average

*Originally named Jean-Jacques Fougere Audubon-Rabin, he changed his name by stages to the form given. Strictly speaking he was more an artist than a scientist.

man. But among social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, etc.) 41% had been divorced at least once—worse than the general average and almost in a class with theatrical people.

OTHER SCIENTISTS may suffer mental and emotional collapse as a result of crushing misfortunes. Take Julius Robert Mayer (1814-78), co-discoverer (with James P. Joule) of the law of conservation of energy. Mayer came back from service as a doctor on a Dutch ship sailing to Indonesia with his head full of this law. He sent a paper to Johann Poggendorff, editor of the *Annalen der Physik und Chemie*, and Mikado of German science in the 1840's. Mayer got no answer, and the paper was found unread among Poggendorff's other papers when he died, thirty-six years later.

Other efforts by Mayer to publicize his theory met little more success. Then Joule's work appeared and was credited with priority, just when Mayer lost his two children. Mayer tried to kill himself by jumping out a window. He broke both legs and was taken to an asylum where the physicians shouted at him: "You have tried to square the circle!" He recovered, not com-

pletely, but enough to take some part in scientific activity.

Alexander Agassiz (1835-1910) suffered similarly when, in 1873, his father, the great Louis Agassiz, and then Alexander's young wife died eight days apart. Though Alexander Agassiz "was never the same man again,* he pulled himself together, withdrew into a shell of reserve, and led a vigorous career as a marine biologist and copper-mining magnate. When Roy Chapman Andrews was a youth in Wisconsin, a friend drowned while canoeing with him. This gave Andrews, in his own words, "a nervous affliction from which I never recovered."** This too the form of a morbid fear of crowds and excitement (shall we call it tyrbepthobia?) and drove him into a career of zoological exploration and collecting. He found trading rifle-shots with Mongolian bandits less bothersome than fighting his way into the subway.

Neurotic compulsion also appear among scientists. There was a technician, Samuel Garman, who worked for many years in the Agassiz Museum at Harvard under Alexander

*G. R. Agassiz, *Letters and Recollections of Alexander Agassiz* (1913), p. 135.

**R. C. Andrews: *Under a Lucky Star* (1943), p. 11.

Agassiz, and later under Thomas Barbour. He was wary and suspicious as a result of his experience with the feuding paleontologists Cope and Marsh, but until he died nobody knew how queer he was. Then Barbour found a cupboard in his room containing jars with the following contents: one was full of little stickers bearing his name and address, which he had cut from his subscription copies of the *Nation* for many years. Another held all his old rubbers. The third contained the uneaten corners of all the sandwiches he had brought to the museum for his lunch: a classical assortment of psychotic symptoms.

ONE SCOURGE of mankind is the paranoid personality: the person whose ego is so pathologically sensitive as to make him self-conceited, hypersuspicious, truculent, vindictive, obsessed with imaginary wrongs and insults, and unable to bear any denial or admit any error. When the *paranoid's* condition becomes acute he becomes a *paranoidiac*, with delusions of grandeur and persecution, and you can lock him up. Unfortunately, millions of *paranoids* are sane in any legal sense, and remain free to make life interesting for their fellow-men—especially when they get into positions of power as with

Ivan the Terrible, Robespierre, Lenin, Hitler, and Stalin.

True to form, the paranoid personality shows up now and then in science.

THE GREAT ether war of the 1840's displayed a whole galaxy of paranoids, of whom the most paranoid was Charles Thomas Jackson (1805-80). Jackson was a native of Plymouth, Massachusetts; a geologist by profession and a dabbler in other sciences, especially chemistry. He was a man of some ability, but thought himself infinitely greater than he was and raised hell all his life trying to make others think so, too. His aberration was talking with scientists and inventors about their ideas, and claiming later that they had gotten all these ideas from him.

In 1832 he was returning from Europe on the packet *Sully* when he got into conversation with a fellow-passenger, a lean, fluffy-haired artist named Morse, about Ampere's recent experiments with the electromagnet and the possibility of sending news by electricity. Inventors had been tinkering with electric telegraphs for decades. A Swiss named Lesage made pith-balls leap from the ends of twenty-four charged wires, corresponding to the alphabet, as early as 1774. None of these devices

worked well enough to be practical. Later, when Morse's successful telegraph became famous, Jackson claimed the credit for inventing it and tried to extort money from Morse. Morse, a vain and testy man himself, brushed aside Jackson's claims. Morse was not really very original in his invention either; but the men from whom he got most of his ideas were Joseph Henry and Leonard Gale, not Charles Jackson.

In 1846, when Jackson heard of Schonbein's discovery of guncotton, he claimed that this, too, was his. In the same year he began his war against William Thomas Green Morton (1819-68) over the discovery of anesthesia. Morton was a young Bostonian dentist who had invented an improved dental plate. To install the plate, any surviving teeth had to be pulled out. To make this process painless, Morton experimented with anesthetics.

HE WAS not actually the first. In 1842 a backwoods physician in Georgia, Crawford W. Long, took a small tumor from the neck of a patient under ether. Being an easy-going and retiring fellow, brought up to think that a gentleman never pushes himself forward, Long did not try very hard to publicize his painless opera-

tions. What publicity he got was mostly adverse. People thought he must be doing something terribly wrong, though they could not say just what.

When Long performed his first painless operations, Morton was in partnership with Dr. Horace Wells. Wells, also interested in anesthesia, tried nitrous oxide, but a public demonstration fizzled and a private patient died under its effects. Wells gave up dentistry and tried various activities, such as touring with a troupe of trained canaries, but all failed.

Morton persisted, using ether. Thinking he saw a fortune in the idea, he called on Jackson, artfully asked question without revealing his discovery, and borrowed apparatus. Having proved that ether worked in dental operations, he made arrangements with Dr. John C. Warren of the Massachusetts General Hospital. On October, 1846, Warren publicly removed a facial tumor from a patient under Morton's anesthesia by physicians: "Gentlemen, this is no humbug."

Hearing of this, Jackson called on Morton and demanded \$500 for the advice he had given. Morton did not have the money, but was not sorry to get Jackson into the enterprise, as Jackson had an established sci-

entific reputation and Morton did not. They agreed instead that the patent should be taken out in both their names and that Morton should pay Jackson 10% of the invention's earnings.

THE USE of ether spread rapidly, despite some delay while a dispute as to whether the Bible allowed anesthesia was ironed out in Scotland. This was effected by citing Genesis II, 21 (*"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and took one of his ribs..."*). Man physicians called Morton unethical for trying to make a fortune out of his discovery, instead of giving it free to the world. In his own profession of dentistry, however, Morton was not being any more unethical than the other dentists of his time. Alternative conventions again.

Morton's patent, in fact, prove unenforceable. after all Morton had no way of knowing when some distant physician pressed a spongeful of ether to his patient's nose. Morton therefore asked the United States government for a grant of money instead. He might have gotten it had not Jackson popped up to claim credit for the whole discovery and to call Morton a "quack doctor" of "infamous character."

So Morton and Jackson fought each other for years, like crabs in a bucket. Morton got some medals, an honorary degree, and a little money, but when \$50,000 was raised for him in England, Jackson and his partisans raised such an uproar that the money was all returned to the donors. Paranoids are often very plausible people.

In addition, Wells, hearing of Morton's fame, decided the he, too, was the sole and original inventor. He began giving emotional speeches, accusing Morton of stealing his idea. Finally he lost his mind. He threw acid in the face of an unoffending prostitute in New York City, was jailed, and killed himself in his cell. His widow added his claim to the confusion. Jackson went to see Long to try to get evidence to support his argument. When Long showed his own evidence of priority, Jackson (who seems in his own twisted way to have been honest in his beliefs about Morton) withdrew in Long's favor.

MORTON'S crowning misfortune was to have the courts hold his patent invalid, in 1862, on the ground that it claimed a monopoly on a law of nature. He acquired a conviction of persecution—it would be wrong to say a *delusion* of persecution, as Jackson did persecute him venomously and magnantly.

On the other hand, Morton showed paranoid characteristics himself—though not nearly so acute as Jackson's. Although he had been doing well as a dentist and manufacturer of dentures when struck with his great idea, he gave up his practice then and never resumed it. He never worked for a living again, but spent his life lobbying and campaigning for the fortune he believed the world owed him. When he and his family were reduced to starvation, his admirers would pass the hat for enough money to keep Morton going for a while. In 1868 he died of apoplexy, brought on by reading an article upholding Jackson, and left his family destitute.

Jackson's victory did him no good either; he became violently insane and spent his last seven years in an asylum.

As for Crawford Long, he seems to have been not only the first effective user of ether as an anesthetic, but the only completely sane man of the lot. Though he made no fortune from his discovery, and fought his share of the war with documents and articles, he did not let the controversy ruin his life. Instead he prospered as a physician and businessman, begat a large family which he ruled with jovial kindness, and even salvaged a tidy fortune and his

home from the turmoil of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Much of the venom of the ether war resulted from the delusion, shared by all the combatants, that there is such a thing as *the* inventor of a major discovery. Actually, an invention consists of many steps. There is the desire for some result or function. There is the first flash of an idea of how to get it. There is reducing the idea to practice by drawings or models. There is applying for a patent. There is making the first one of the things that works. There is making the first one that works well enough to be commercially practical. There is organizing the manufacture and sale of the things. Only in rare cases—as with Edison's phonograph or Judson's zipper—does one man take all or even most of these steps. More often they are done by several men, all of whom are in a sense "inventors." Thus the right answer to the question: who invented the steamboat? is not "Fitch" or "Fulton," but "Jouffroy, Fitch, Rumsey, Evans, Symington, Stevens, and Fulton"—to name only the major contributors. And thus today Long and Morton share the credit for anesthesia.

No one had done anything like this in over two thousand years -- and no one would know that David Malry had done it ...

YESTERDAY'S HEROES

by Ron Smith

In those days it was a god and they worshiped it. There were no churches and there were no idols, but their religion was strong and powerful, because it lived in their minds. It was not forgotten between holy days, to be resurrected anew periodically. It was with them always; it was at the very bottom of the well of their being, from which all thought sprung and was influenced and molded. It was: Youth.

But there were some, at the time of each census, who were denied that youth, who were told they could not have it again. What horrors they must have suffered, what nightmares they must have lived each day as the end drew nearer. But we, who are so lucky in our eternal world, cannot know. In the last analysis, we cannot appreciate their pain; we cannot know what we cannot experience. It is only they, in their grief and their torment, who could know what it is like to die.

(From "Yesterday's Heroes" by Andrew Brinx, first published in the year 11,027.)

DAVID MALRY was 2046 years old. He didn't look that old, he didn't *feel* that old. But he was, and there was nothing he could do about it.

He was four years too old, as it turned out; and because of that he was to die.

It was the year of the census. The census had already been taken, of course—and, as usual, there were too many. Two hundred and six too many, exactly. One of those two hundred and six was David Malry; he was the youngest one.

Of course, it was entirely fair. He realized that, as he sat on the balcony to his rooms listening to the morning breeze. In a society such as theirs, there was room for only so many; and when some had to go, it was the oldest. *Four years, he thought, four blessed, wonderful years, and because of them I lose—how many?*

This wouldn't happen to us, he thought, *if it wasn't for the children.* But, as hard as he tried to be angry at the injustice of it, he knew there was none. He knew the answer—there had to be children.

There were a hundred reasons—the need of new minds to keep the old ones stimulated and awake; of fresh imaginations to replace the old, hampered by the social conditioning of centuries, and keep the

culture moving. There were many others, all of them right, all of them good—and, of course, the last one: to increase the race. Because each step forward, each new habitable planet discovered, each planetary rockpile finally made suitable for human habitation, each new scientific discovery of social use, meant that much more room for that many more people.

And so the children were born and, as was bound to happen, sometimes things got out of balance.

And David Malry was one of the ones on his end of the see-saw who had to get off, if it was to keep moving smoothly and safely.

HE KNEW this. He had told it to himself over and over and a hundred times over, in a thousand different ways. And still he could not accept it.

He fought it, fought it hard, grimly and purposefully. But always it came, when he would relax for awhile and turn his mind to other things. It would pop up, like the furniture from the floors when you waved your hand, into his mind. The thought: *I want to live.*

But in order to live, he had to be rejuvenated by the government, by their machines—the only ones of their kind in existence. And that was im-

possible. He knew it was impossible.

In two years, he thought—it would take that long for his circulatory system to begin to break down. The cells in his body were, individually, immortal, but as an organized system they were not. The organization depended on his circulatory system, which in turn depended on the rejuvenation machines for its immortality. Without them, it would soon break down and he would die, quickly, quietly and peacefully in his sleep. Of old age.

He sighed and glanced once more out across the balcony railing at the trees, their branches waving gently in the artificial breeze, and beyond them, out across the symmetrical city to the blackness beyond. Between him and the cold blackness of space, pin pointed by the stars, was a protective dome, but he could not see it. He saw only the stars, echoing their brightness in his mind.

HE GOT UP from his chair and walked to the doorway to his rooms. He passed his hand over an opening in the door jamb and the chair disappeared into the balcony floor.

As Malry entered the apartment, the buzzer rang on his Communico. He walked over and switched it on.

On the wall to his right appeared the lifesize, three dimensional figure of a man. The wall seemed to suddenly open out into another room, as if a door had been flung back.

The man spoke immediately, "Doctor Malry, there's been an accident. I thought I'd better call you."

"Where?" asked David.

"Out on the surface; at the mines. One of the surveying cars has fallen into a fissure."

"What? How could that happen?"

"I don't know, Doctor. If you want me to find out, I'll tune in on them and ask."

David looked at him intently for a moment, his thoughts snapped suddenly out of himself, out to the surface of the planetoid. *A twisted car there and a man, dead or—*" The thought struck him with what seemed like physical force.

"Is the driver dead?" he asked the figure in the wall.

"No. That is, they don't think so."

—*dying*, he finished his thought. "Never mind tuning them in," he said. "I'll check myself."

He turned toward the wall and walked through it.

DAVID MALRY came up the rampway from the tube into the Mines Coordination office. As he entered, he

noddod to the man seated in front of the radio. "How did it happen?"

"Well, the fissure wasn't out there last time we checked; but it's out there now. Small cleft in the surface—might have been a meteor. There's no air out there, and if it was a big one—"

"They got the crane?"

"Yes, but it won't work."

"Won't work?"

"No, the car's wedged in too tight. If they pull it out they'll break it open. They're digging him out."

"But that'll take hours! He may be hurt."

"I know—but that's the way it's got to be."

David waved his hand at the wall and sat down on the chair that rose swiftly to meet him. He studied his feet thoughtfully. Finally he said, "Who is it?"

"Cary Hinge."

DAVID KNEW Hinge only casually, had met him once or twice, but that was all. Still, it worried him—he had to do something. He couldn't sit there and wait, knowing that a few hours might be the difference between the man's life and death.

"Is there any way of getting me into the car?"

"I don't see how; there's no air-lock on it."

"How long would it take to

weld a compartment onto the outside of the door big enough to squeeze me in? I've got my kit here. If he's hurt, maybe I can keep him alive until they dig us out."

The man at the radio thought for a moment. "Maybe twenty minutes."

"That might make a difference. Think it would work?"

"I don't know. We can try." He flipped a switch and started talking earnestly to the engineer in charge of the rescue.

UNDER THE black blanket of space, David Malry stood on the lip of the narrow crevice watching the men weld the make-shift air-lock in place. Around him machines were greedily gulping mouthfuls of rock.

The engineer in charge stood behind Malry talking to someone through his radio. David could hear his voice, but he ignored it.

His attention was rivited to the car wedged tightly in the crevice below him. He watched the men clumsily working away with their oxygen-acetylene torches.

At last they were finished. How long it had taken them, he didn't know; he hadn't been aware of time. He'd been lost in his own thoughts, murky and confused. Startled, he realized that he hadn't moved from the spot since he had got there.

"All right, Doctor," someone said quietly over his suit radio. "If you're ready."

Malry hesitated. "Are you sure it will work?" he asked. "Are you sure none of the air will escape?"

"We're sure, Doctor."

Malry slid himself carefully over the lip of the crevice, firmly clenching the rope in his hands. Slowly he lowered himself.

When his feet clanged against the metal of the car he let go. "Okay," he said. "In I go."

HE STUFFED himself painfully into the compartment, head first. When he was completely in, they put the outside door in place and welded it shut.

Malry took his small torch and, working with his eyes shut, started cutting a hole in the car.

In a short while, he had a hole big enough to crawl through. He waited a few moments for the metal to cool down, and then began inching through.

Halfway in, his spacesuit caught on a snag. He tried to squeeze backwards to get it loose, but he was stuck.

He lay there, the jagged steel pressed against his flexible suit and his thighs. Within seconds he began to feel it; his legs hurt.

He tried to move his gloved hand down between his suit and the raw steel. His fingers barely reached the opening. He struggled and squirmed and wiggled, and finally he pulled his suit loose and crawled into the car.

He was in the rear, next to the fuel compartment. Below him, at an angle, was the driver's seat. And twisted around one corner he could see a foot.

He lowered himself carefully, pressing his hands against the walls of the short passageway. His feet touched the back of the seat and he lowered himself quickly to his knees.

Pressed between the front of the seat and the transparent window was Cary Hinge, one leg doubled up against his body, the other thrust outward, one arm twisted under him. He was unconscious, and blood trickled from a large gash on his right cheek.

DAVID REACHED into his kit and pulled out cotton and a small bottle of green liquid. He dabbed the liquid on the cotton and the cotton on the man's cut. Then he pulled out a hypodermic and filled it from another bottle. This he shot into the man's shoulder, then carefully and painfully pulled the man's arm out from under him. He had to lay flat on the back of the seat and



reach around it to do this, and his progress was slow. At last the arm came out and he straightened it as best he could. The break wouldn't be completely knit by the time the rescuers dug them out, so he didn't worry about it.

Next he painstakingly felt the man's body, for other breaks and abrasures. Nothing. Unless there was a fracture, there was nothing else wrong with him that Malry could see. And, anyway, he couldn't do anything about a fracture until he got back to the city.

David started to sit up from his uncomfortable position against the back of the seat, when he saw something sticking out from under the man's body. Just the tip of something black.

He looked at it for a moment, his thoughts suddenly turning wildly in confused

circles. Their flight in his mind seemed to make wild patterns and ringing noises—he felt dizzy.

HE REACHED down and slowly pulled the piece of metal out from under the opposite side of the man's body. It was a broken shard from the steering mechanism of the car. He checked and found that another piece had entered the man's back. It had merely pierced the skin and had not hit the spinal column nor broken any ribs. That was easy to fix. In his kit there was—

But for some reason he didn't move, couldn't move. His hand lay helpless on the seat in front of him; he couldn't move it. And he couldn't release the fingers that grasped tightly, frantically, the sharp metal shard.

Malry stared at it, fascinated, his mind whirling. He tried to stop himself, tried to think, coolly logically unemotionally, but his brain refused to respond. His kit lay beside him easily within his grasp, but it was as if it were a thousand miles away.

Then it hit, with a mental force that sent him scurrying to the hidden corners of his mind for protection. He stared in at himself, horrified, but still unable to move. The

thought came and he couldn't stop it: *Kill*.

It whirled in his mind like the swarm of a million bees. *Kill*. It searched in his mind and hunted him out and made him look at it, consciously and clearly. *Kill*. And then another word, a word he remembered faintly from a world over 2000 years gone: *Murder*. He had not heard the word, he had not thought it, in over 2000 years, not since his youth when such things happened. Then there had been murders and accidents and memories of wars. But in all the time since, these things had never happened, so far as he knew—and he was positive he would know if they had.

The concept was alien to him, hidden away under 2000 years of happiness and peace and security and conditioning.

And now he felt it, now it made him grasp the sharp metal in his hand, tightly, desperately.

He looked at the man beneath him, twisted and limp. And as he looked the voice in his mind spoke: *They'll never know, they'll never know, they'll never know... over and over and around and around, quietly, persistently. I am the first, it spoke, I am the first to live if someone should die. I am the first to live.*

His eyes stared in horror at his rebellious hand as it lifted its weapon toward the helpless man.

"NICE JOB Doctor Malry," the voice said, a distant voice, unrelated to any reality he knew or could think of.

"That arm will heal nicely," it continued. "Should be all right in a week, easily. And except for a couple cuts and bruises and that sliver of metal in his back, he's all right. And those are nothing serious."

The voice stopped and was quiet for a moment. "Say, Doctor Malry, what's the matter?" said another voice, or maybe it was the same one in a different tone, he didn't know. "You feel all right?"

There was nothing he could say. His mouth was sealed and his vocal cords refused to work. He just turned away from the table holding the prone figure, and the man standing beside it, and walked over to the Cumminico. He flipped the switch and walked through the wall back to his rooms.

He stood in the center of his green rug that felt so much like grass, just stood there, and tried his best not to think. He wanted to forget it, push it away from him, bury it. He

wanted to live what short time he had left as best he could. And he didn't want to think about it again as long as he lived.

As long as he lived.

He didn't know why. He didn't know why he hadn't done it. The whole scene was confused in his mind, a suspended area in time that he could only dimly recognize. He

only knew that he couldn't do it. No matter what the price he had to pay for his failure. There were just some things a man *couldn't* do, that was all, and murder was one of them.

Forget it, he told himself savagely. Forget it. For as long as you live, forget it. *For as long as you live.*



READIN' and WRITHIN'

Book Reviews by Damon Knight and Murray King

IT SEEMS altogether likely that the two most successful "science fiction" books of this year will turn out to be "The Power," by Frank M. Robinson (Lippincott, \$3.00) and "The Shrinking Man," by Richard Matheson (Gold Medal, 35¢). "The Power" has already gone into a second printing; it was published in a shorter version by *Blue Book* and as I write has just been telecast by *Studio One*. "The Shrinking Man" was bought by Universal-International before publication, and Matheson himself wrote the screen-play. These are matters to make the average s-f writer's tongue hang out; so it seems important to ask, "How did they do it?"

For one thing, by avoiding the "s-f" label. The Matheson book is introduced simply as a "tale of horror"; the Robinson as "a novel of menace."

"The Power" is about a mystery man named Adam Hart, who appears to have assorted malignant powers. He can read minds, transfer thoughts, erase memories. He can control another person's muscles, causing spastic convulsions, or heart failure, or what have you, up to and including championship basketball. He also has a useful defensive trait: (borrowed from the Venerian turtle in Brown and Reynolds' "Six-Legged Svengali.") everyone who looks at him sees a different Adam Hart, but always an object of love or admiration—for instance, a teen-aged girl sees a bobby-soxer's dream; a college professor sees an intense and brilliant student; to a coach, he's the perfect athlete, and so on.

WILLIAM TANNER, chairman of the Navy Committee For Human Research at a Midwestern

university, discovers that Hart exists and is a member of the nine-man committee. Hart accordingly marks him down for death, and the rest of the book is concerned with Tanner's struggle to survive long enough to find out which of the eight suspects is Hart.

This question is the teaser on which the formal structure of the novel is built, and it takes delicate handling: if it were solved too soon, there wouldn't be enough novel. So Tanner avoids the obviously sensible things to do (for instance, he never gets each committee member to describe each of the others, or looks up their dossiers in the university files). The matter is eventually settled by a process of elimination: at book's end, most of the prime suspects have been killed by Hart.

Robinson is a gifted and sensitive writer: his evocations of Chicago at night, early in the story when Tanner and his invisible pursuer are roaming the lonely streets, are persuasively scary. But "The Power" has one other built-in fault: as in Norvell W. Page's similar "But Without Horns," it's necessary at the same time to build up the superman as an overwhelming terror, and to keep the hero alive to the end of the book.

Since one serious effort on the part of the superman would do Tanner in, Hart has to throttle himself down to a campaign of petty persecutions. In spite of all Robinson's care, this is not in the least credible, and the story becomes less frightening the longer it goes on.

The manipulation of the suspects is competent but predictable, and the question from page 33 on is not so much "Who?" as "How?"

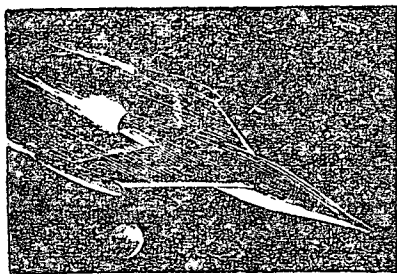
This straitjacket of plot gradually squeezes out everything good in the book: the characterizations, for instance, which are sharp and memorable at the beginning, are cheapened one by one. As a formal novel of detection and suspense, "The Power" is neither better nor worse than the average lending-library product; its appeal as science fiction is minuscule. The explanation of the book's peculiar strength lies elsewhere.

"THE SHRINKING MAN,"

Written with much less care and integrity, is the story of one Scott Carey, a young man who suddenly begins shrinking exactly one-seventh of an inch every day. The story proper begins when he is five-sevenths of an inch tall and has been marooned in his own cellar forty-four days, with five more to go before he becomes zero inches tall and whiffs out like a candle flame.

Previous stages in his descent are told as interruptions: the focus is on Carey's last five days, his loneliness and hardships; his struggles to get food; and his occasional encounters with a grudge-bearing black widow spider. The spider has only seven legs; Carey has previously knocked off the other one with a stone, like an Ahab in reverse.

At five sevenths of an inch, Carey is just about one one-hun-



to occasional incongruous bits of truth, as when Carey is shocked and stunned by the impacts of gigantic water drops. The most striking lapse in logic, for readers who have seen this subject handled before, is Matheson's neglect of the square-cube law.

dredth of his former six feet; everything around him, therefore, ought to appear one hundred times its former size. This seems like a simple enough relation to bear in mind—1 ft. = 100 ft.—but Matheson writes, on p. 24: "Twelve inches, and yet to him it was the equivalent of 150 feet to a normally sized man."

On the next page, we find Carey staring up awe-struck at the towering height of a refrigerator, "as high as a ten-story building"—i. e., 100 ft. exactly twelve inches, on Carey's scale. The wicker table beside it is "half as high," or six inches; a little later it turns out to be 150 ft. tall on Carey's scale, meaning a foot and a half. Even so, this is not much of a wicker table. But from this foot-and-a-half height Carey has to climb a further seventy-five feet to the top of the refrigerator—that is, nine inches, making the refrigerator two and a quarter feet tall—still not much, but an improvement.

The cellar episodes vary from unintentional comedy like this ("Son of a bitch!" he yelled, and he kicked the cracker to bits...) through long stretches of boredom,

OTHER THINGS being equal, a small object has proportionately less volume (and therefore less mass) than a large one. If our measuring sticks were to shrink at the same time, there would be no difference, but they don't: atoms and molecules provide an absolute standard of size; and in practice, so do the minimal sizes of living cells, and the fineness of muscle fiber. So a flea can perform gymnastic feats on spindling legs, while an elephant lumbers clumsily on massive ones. It follows that a man Carey's size could jump like a grasshopper, and could lift objects many times his own weight. But Carey pants and struggles to carry a pin, and toils up a wicker chair as if it were Everest. When, near the end of the book, he finally realizes that he can fall long distances without being hurt, and does so, the event is totally incredible—because nothing else in the book prepares you for it: earlier, when Carey tries a much shorter fall, Matheson would have you believe the shock is agonizing.

A few drops of genuine feeling are distilled from this brew, as when, on his last night, Carey faces extinction without hope or fear; but the following scene.

when he wakes up still alive and still shrinking, is perfectly ludicrous—evidently the author has some vague idea that minus numbers and microscopic sizes are the same thing.

Like Matheson's first Gold Medal novel, "I Am Legend," this one seems to be a drama of alienation. In the former book, everybody but the hero was a vampire; in this one, everybody else is a giant. "The Shrinking Man" at one point is strikingly reminiscent of "Alice In Wonderland": when Carey is the wrong size to climb the cellar steps, the door is open; when he's the right size, the door is shut.

In the before-cellar episodes Matheson, using quantity of emotion as a substitute for quality, runs through a kind of bathroom-sink collection of vulgarities which, if written and published about a real person, would be called yellow journalism. The story line is purposeless and repetitive; about seven tenths of it is padding, but every now and then Matheson succeeds in registering the eerie scenic effects for which he is noted. In one short passage, when the forty-two-inch hero hitches a ride from an aging, drunken homosexual, Matheson's prose and his characters come brilliantly to life, as if the author wanted to prove that he really *can* write, when not churning out this sludge.

THE REST of the book, like much of Matheson's work, is a dismal interior monologue, end-

lessly reflecting the author's own stream of consciousness at its most petty and banal.

Why did the movies buy this bad book? Because it has a Creature in it—the aforesaid black widow spider. But this only leads us to another question: How did it happen that the big science fiction movie boom turned itself into a Creature cycle?

To answer by indirection, let's look again at "The Power." The revelation that Adam Hart is a member of the committee comes about in the following way: All the members have filled out experimental questionnaires, but have not signed them. One of these questionnaires shows that the subject "has never been sick, never had any serious personal problems, never worried, and has an IQ close to the limits of measurability." One of the committee members, the neurotic John Olsen, insists the questionnaires be taken seriously: to humor him, Tanner proposes a test. He balances a tiny umbrella-shaped bit of paper on the point of a pin. "I'm assuming that our...superman...has mental powers such that he could make this paper revolve on the pin merely by concentrating on it..." All the members try simultaneously to make it move, and it does: ergo, the superman exists among them.

Please notice, first of all, that Tanner's peculiar assumption is not even remotely suggested by the questionnaire. Second, note that if anybody really cared to identify the subject of the questionnaire, it could have been done by elimination in five minutes. Third, note

that this power—telekinesis—is irrelevant to the powers actually used by Hart, and is never used again in the book until a similarly irrelevant test at the end. I think the effect is deliberate: Hart is not a superman. Superman can do anything; therefore Hart can do anything. Ordinary human beings must be helpless before Superman; therefore whatever logic may suggest, they are helpless.

HART IS not a man but a symbol: he's danger walking faceless down a dark street; danger, lurking invisible somewhere in the mechanical hum of the city. Hart is the wise guy who wants to kill you.

He's the man with the keen eyes who uses the big words you can't understand, who juggles with dangerous things you can't even see. He's the man who invented V-2 and the Bomb. The Scientist. Professor. Egghead.

Matheson's ignorance and distrust of science are as profound as Bradbury's, but Robinson is almost the type of the pure science-fiction writer; he majored in physics at Beloit, spent his Navy hitch as an electronic technician. It is not accidental that two such different writers should produce books so essentially similar. This is *not* just bad science fiction; it's something else altogether.

It's anti-science fiction: a turning away, not merely from the standard props of s-f (which are

retained as vestiges) but from the habits of thought and belief which underlie science itself—the assumption that things can be put into categories (note how Hart's "Power" resists classification); that things can be measured (cf. Matheson's indifference to common arithmetic); the assumption of cause and effect (Matheson's almost contemptuously perfunctory "explanation" of the shrinking man: "radioactive spray" plus insect spray, uniting by a kind of magical miscegenation into a toxin). Logic goes, too: Adam Hart's actions are not rational if you assume he is a man, even a superman; but their very irrationality makes him more horrible if you see him as a formless menace.

IT'S HARDLY necessary to point out that the black widow in "The Shrinking Man" is not a real spider. Matheson has evidently read the Britannica article on black widows, and tells you toward the end of the book that, "naturally reticent and secretive, they built their webs in the most dark, secluded corners"—this after having the same spider chase Carey all over the cellar like a dog after a chicken. There's no rational motive involved when Carey reverses roles to go hunting the spider, on his last day, and Matheson's attempts to make sense of the event in these terms are palpably false. But:

...That spider was immortal. It was more than a spider. It was every unknown terror

in the world fused into wriggling, poison-jawed horror. It was every anxiety, insecurity, and fear in his life given a hideous, night-black form.

And here's William Tanner, in "The Power":

He shimmered. It would be so damned easy to get the shakes and end up in a blue funk, just knowing what was after him. Not who. Not a person, not somebody he could fight, not somebody he could flush out into the open.

Not who, but what.

In a grisly scene, Matheson's hero destroys the spider by impalement. ("The ghastly, piercing screech... was like the distant scream of a gutted horse.")

Spiders don't scream, as even Matheson might know; but gutted scientists do.

Throughout "The Power," Tanner takes elaborate precautions at night—changing his lodgings, and so on—but seems to feel he's perfectly safe during the day. The symbolic nature of this feeling is evident, but Robinson attempts to justify it logically on p. 169: "He had never thought that Hart would attempt [psychic violence] in public, that he would run the risk of giving himself away." This is obvious nonsense, since Hart's weapon is invisible and intangible, leaves no traces, and can be used from a distance. What Robinson seems to be saying is; *Safety in numbers*. To be precise, safety in a mob.

This is more than disturbing, and so is the "logic" of Tanner's method of testing suspects: If you try to kill a man, and succeed, then it wasn't Adam Hart. (If you duck

an old woman, and she drowns, then it wasn't a witch.)

This way to the bandwagon—which way to the pogrom? D.K.

THE BIG NEWS in hard cover science fiction for 1956 is the series of novels inaugurated by Avalon Books (22 East 60th St., New York 22, N. Y.) listing at \$2.50 each. They are handsome, well-made editions, and while I have not seen the finished copies of all of the first five, those that I have seen bear tasteful and artistic jacket designs by Emsh. All Avalon Books have Plasti-Kleer Jacket Covers, which are both protection and enhancement.

This is intended as a continuing series, and judging by present evidence, the Avalon policy can be summed up as: "Intelligent, well-written science fiction novels of all types. We're not afraid of ideas." Of these five, two were previously published as magazine serials; one is an expansion of a magazine "complete feature novel," and two are originals.

Thematically, they break down thus:

Suspense—*Three To Conquer*, by Eric Frank Russell. Readers of *Astounding Science Fiction* will remember this under the title of "Call Him Dead". Russell's fine story of a reluctant telepath, who is the only person who can track down three men who are not what they appear to be, has improved with compression. The character pictures have lost nothing of their first impact; and while those who

read the magazine version might miss a few touches, I doubt that anyone who hadn't read it before will be aware of any abridgement. A fine volume for a gift, if you don't want a hardcover edition for your library—although you should.

Realism—*Police Your Planet*, by Eric Van Lhin. This was a serial in the del Rey *Science Fiction Adventures*, and has also benefited from compression (magazine serials can't be reprinted in hardcover editions these days without abridgement—at least, not at the reasonable price Avalon asks). Superficially a novel of political corruption, it is actually an intensely realistic portrait of what might happen on an interplanetary frontier if present-day nationalism extends over into the space era. There's no sentimentalism, no glamor and no lingering over details of the picture for extra shock value. None is necessary! And in Mother Corey (not female) and Honest Izzy, we have two of the most believable characters I've seen in a long time in science fiction. Verdict: same as on the Russell book.

Manners—*Tomorrow's World*, by Hunt Collins. A sensation when it first appeared as a short novel in *If*, under the title of "Malice In Wonderland," this is science fiction in the sense that *Brave New World* is science fiction, except that there is less "gadgetry" than there was in the famous Huxley novel. In the process of expansion, the author has done a great deal more than merely lengthen the story. He has plumbed deeper into the feelings and fears and hopes

of his future society and given more solidity to the allegory. I am grateful that the thinly disguised "dirty word" expressions that cluttered the magazine version have been eliminated. They may have been meant to underline the essentially adolescent attitude of the Vikes: but I think that a reader who did not grasp this without such aids probably wouldn't get the point anyway. In its present form, the novel is brilliantly conceived, skillfully written, and deeply felt. Not for children or prudes, nor for people who really want a sex novel, either; it's a shocker and much closer to mainstream literature than science fiction. *A must!*

Sociological—*The Secret People*, by Raymond F. Jones. If you think that the theme of struggle between "normal" human beings and "mutants" has been worked to death, and has nothing fresh or interesting to offer, then here's the novel that ought to change your mind. There are no cardboard characters here, no contrived melodrama. Jones has always had the ability to project empathy on to all the people in his stories, and he's nearly always had fascinating ideas, thoughtfully worked out. Heretofore, his stories have suffered from his tendency to keep on saying the same thing over and over again and stop the story while he—or some character—lectures to the reader. This is deadly in fiction and I'm happy to report that Jones seems to have cured himself. Don't miss this one!

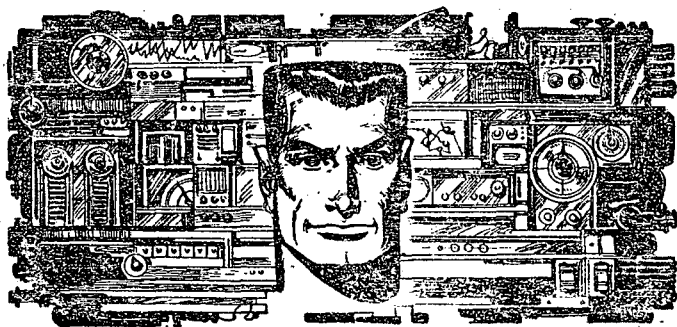
Cosmic—*The Star Ways*, by Poul Anderson. If the term "space opera" didn't have almost universal connotations of "juvenile" and "comic

strip" I'd have listed this novel as such. Then I could have made the point that *good* space opera very definitely has its place among the many mansions of science fiction. However, I'd better not use the dread term, lest some readers assume that this novel of a far-flung future—where a Nomad society is caught between the outspread of integrated civilization and the encroachment of a totally different culture whose existence has been heretofore unsuspected by either—is Captain Future stuff. *The Star Ways* isn't juvenile at all; it would have been a credit to any of the top science fiction magazines as a serial. In the intricate philosophy of the alien culture, Anderson approaches the excellence of S. Fowler Wright, just as Collins approaches the excellence of Aldous Huxley. Highly recommended.

Summing things up, Avalon has made a notable start with two fine originals, one excellent expansion, and two very good abridgements. My one complaint is strictly subjective: I'm not happy about the colors used on the bindings and the

science fiction symbol. Both give the appearance of a "juvenile" line, which these books most certainly are not. Also, I can't enthuse over the title chosen for the Collins novel "Tomorrow's World". And the illustration on the jacket (well drawn though it is) is anything but indicative of the book's content. This is partly atoned for, however, by the jacket blurbs, which show that whoever wrote them had read the books carefully. You might not think that this merits special compliment—but if you've read as many science fiction jacket blurbs as I have, you'll know that it's unusual.

As unusual as the Avalon policy, in fact. Whoever heard of a (non fan) publisher operating on the assumption that the public will be interested in science fiction which is neither absurd as scientific extrapolation nor mediocre as fiction? An extra "Hugo" should be created made at next year's World Science Fiction for the most courageous publisher. M. K.



THE MAN WITH TALENT

by Robert
Silverberg

illustrated by Orban

Following in the lines suggested by such stories as James Blish's "Art Work" and Clifford D. Simak's "Spaceman's Van Gogh", Robert Silverberg considers the case of a poet who wanted to escape the philistines. Emil Vilar wanted to be appreciated for his true worth; but he hadn't considered just what that might involve.

THERE WAS a little clipping that Emil Vilar carried about with him, a review of his first and only volume of poetry. Now, on this new world, he drew it out and read it for the tenthousandth time.



Vilar shook his fist at the big domed mansion.

It was yellow with age, and the print was getting blurred, but that didn't matter; the words were inscribed on Emil Vilar's brain in perpetuity.

"Emil Vilar understands the world as few poets ever have," the clipping said. "Tragically, the world will never understand him. His talent is too great."

Vilar had blushed when that review appeared; he had known, inwardly, that it was the truth, but he had neither dared to admit it to himself nor welcomed another's saying it.

He had tried. For twenty years after, he had continued to write and to try. And finally, he had admitted the truth of what the anonymous reviewer had said—and he had left Earth forever.

He looked up from the clipping at the landscape of his new world. He had selected it at random, from the thick volume of catalogued worlds in the library. Which world it was, did not matter to him; all that mattered was that it was not Earth.

"Rigel Seven," he said aloud. The words were strange in his mouth, and he savored the interplay of the not-quite-*assonant* vowels of the two mild *trochees* that named his new home.

HE WAS faintly disappointed, now that he was here, that he had picked a Terraformed planet. His motives had been clear enough at the start: he wanted a world as much like and as far from Earth as possible, where he could work in peace, unknown and undisturbed—where people would not plague him with their well-meant misinterpretations of his work, sting him with accusations of ivory-towerism or artistic irresponsibility, or call Vilar any of the other names they had called him because he insisted

on writing his poetry for himself and himself alone.

Earth didn't understand. Earth wanted him to be a *rhym*er, not a poet—and so Emil Vilar had quietly removed himself from the Ter-ran scene. He had chosen a Terraformed planet as his new home. But as he looked at the gently sloping green hills and the familiar-seeming puffs of white fleece in the soft blue-sky, he realized he had made one of his rare mistakes. How much richer his imagination would have been, he thought sadly, had he selected an alien-form world—one which had not yet been converted into a carbon copy of the mother planet. Here, he had the same sky and the same clouds as on Earth; only the sun was different.

Well, he was here, and here he would stay. Carefully, he folded his clipping and slid it into his wallet. Rigel Seven was as good a place as any, and any would be better than Earth.

THE ROBOT in the Earth-side routing office had told him, with a smirk on its mirrored face, that he was the first emigrant to Rigel Seven in over eight hundred years. That had been all right, too.

The planet had been settled, a thousand years earlier,

by sixteen wealthy Terran families; they had purchased it jointly as a private estate. The conditions of the sale, of course, had been that the planet remain open to all comers of emigration, but that was a safe risk. The sky was full of stars, and each had its cluster of worlds. Who would cross five hundred light-years to settle on Rigel Seven, when Sirius and Vega and Procyon and the Centauri stars beckoned just a few light-years from Earth?

Who but Emil Vilar, fleeing quietly from the world that would never understand him?

He had saved some five thousand dollars, in his fifty years. That had nearly covered the transit fee; the rest had been supplied by his friends.

There had been six of them, men with faith in Emil Vilar. They had fought against his going; but when they saw he was determined to go they helped him. They contributed the needed thousand to see him through the journey; they established a trust fund that would provide a monthly remittance for him for the rest of his life.

He took a deep breath. Rigel Seven was Terraformed, but they had left out the stink of Earth's air and the filth of her cities. The air was fresh and

clear here. He smiled at the sight of his shadow, stretched mightily ahead of him over the grass.

For the first time in his memory, he felt happy.

THE RIGEL SEVEN spaceport was at the edge of a broad field that swept up the side of the hill in the distance like a green carpet. Further back, on the hill, Vilar could see the shimmering paleness of a domed house. Someone was coming down the brown, winding path that led from the hill to the field.

He hefted his small suitcase and started to walk forward rapidly. The man met him in the middle of the field. He was tall and bronzed, shirtless, with long, rippling muscles lying flat and firm on his arms and chest. Vilar felt suddenly ashamed of his own dumpy body.

"You're the emigrant, aren't you?"

"I am Emil Vilar. The ship has just left me here."

"I know," the tall man said, grinning affably. "We saw it come down. It was quite a novelty for us; we don't get much traffic here, you know."

"I can imagine," Vilar said quietly. "Well, I shan't bother you much. I keep to myself most of the time."

"We have a place all ready

for you. My name's Carpenter, by the way—Melbourne Hadley Carpenter. Come: I'll show you to your shack, and then you can come visit us later. We'll tell you how things work here."

"Work? But—I do not plan to participate in any communal activ—"

He paused, frowning, and shook his head gently: this was no time to spout a declaration of principles. "Never mind," he said. "Show me where I stay."

CARPENTER led him back up the path to the foot of the hill, where there was a small shack looking upward at the great domed house.

"This is ideal," said Vilar. It was just what he had envisioned when he had made arrangements to live here.

"See you later," Carpenter told him, waved cheerily, and left. Vilar put a hand on the door-opener, broke the photonic circuit, and stepped in.

One bookcase, one bed, one closet, one desk, one dresser. Ideal.

Vilar unpacked his single suitcase rapidly. It had been no struggle for him to break away from his Earthly possessions; he had been able to bring everything he owned, and still make the fifty-pound mass limit of the subspace liner with ease.

First came the books, just eight of them. There was the slim blue-bound copy of *Poems*, by Emil Vilar (London, 2643, 61 pp.) After that, Pound's *Cantos*, the complete hundred and eight. Next came the King James Bible, *Swann's Way*, the complete Yeats, Davis' *On Historical Analysis* (both volumes in one), the plays of Cyril Tourneur, and the Greek Anthology. These were all Vilar had kept from a lifetime of reading, and he had added the most recent—the single volume of Proust—sixteen years before. Now, he considered his library closed.

HIS MEAGER wardrobe followed, and he arrayed it in the closet and dresser with customary methodical precision. After that, his linens and other household goods. Next, the thin file envelope containing his poetic output since the 2643 volume. It was all unpublished, and the world had seen little of it.

Those works which had somehow passed muster and been shown to a few friends—those poems Vilar now regarded as tainted, though he kept them. Each seemed stained by the muddleheaded comment it had inspired.

"A wonderful thing, Emil—but isn't it a shade too long?"

"Marvelous imagery, but I

don't understand the applicability of the reference to Dido in line 11."

"Magnificent, but—"

"Splendid, but—"

Or: "It's worthless, Emil, but I have an idea for fixing it. Why don't you—"

He had listened patiently to each of them, digested their often-conflicting critical views with dignity, and, finally, turned his back on the lot of them. Retreating to Rigel Seven was the easiest solution for all; there had been no other way.

Had he remained on Earth, he would have spent the rest of his days unchangingly, plagued by the cultists, the center of a well-meaning circle of admirers and worshippers who longed to share his gift—though they had no notion of the anguish they brought to its possessor.

Forget them, Emil, he ordered himself sternly. He continued unpacking. He drew out a package of paper: two reams, all he would need for the rest of his life. His pen. His notebook.

He looked around. Everything was where it should be. The room was complete.

VILAR SAT down at his desk and reached for a book. His hand lingered momentarily over his own little volume, quivered involuntarily,

and moved on. He drew forth Yeats, then reconsidered and put him back. Fugitive lines from Eliot, whom he had long since memorized and so had not needed to bring with him, flickered through his mind:

....What will the spider do,

Suspend its operations,
will the weevil

Delay? De Bailhache,
Fresca, Mrs. Cammel,
whirled.

Beyond the circuit of the
shuddering Bear

In fractured atoms. Gull
against the wind, in the
windy straits

Of Belle Isle, or running
on the Horn,

White feathers in the
snow, the Gulf claims,

And an old man driven
by the Trades

To a sleepy corner.

Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain
in a dry season.

HE WORKED, for most of that night, on a free fantasy based on the opening lines of *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Toward dawn, Vilar rose, tore up the sheet, and blotted what he had written from his mind. He went outside on his tiny porch to watch the bloated sun creep above the horizon of Rigel Seven.

Shortly after sunrise, Melbourne Hadley Carpenter returned. "Have a good night?"

Vilar, rumpled-looking and red-eyed, nodded. "Excellent."

"Glad to hear it. Suppose you come up to the house, now. My Dad's waiting to meet you, and so are all the others."

Vilar frowned suspiciously. "Why do they want to meet me?"

"Oh, just curiosity, I guess. You're the only one here who's not one of the Families, you know."

"I know," Vilar said, relieved. "You're sure you've never heard of me then?"

Carpenter shrugged. "How would we ever hear of you? We're completely out of touch with things, you know."

"True." One major worry was thereby avoided—he would be a complete stranger here, as he had hoped. A fresh start would be possible. The old man's brain was *not* dry; here in this sleepy corner, he could scale the greatest heights, without attracting the attention that was so fatal to artistic endeavor.

HE FOLLOWED the tall young man up the hill and into the domed house. The lines of the building were clear and simple; in his amateur's way, Vilar approved of the architecture wholeheartedly. It

had none of the falseness of Earth's current pseudo-archaism.

In the spacious central hall, an immense table had been set, and at least fifty people sat around it. A tall man—looking much like Melbourne Hadley Carpenter, but much older—with iron-gray hair and faintly stooping shoulders, rose from his seat at the head of the table.

"You're Emil Vilar," he said ringingly. "We're very happy to see you. I'm Theodore Hadley Carpenter, and this is my family."

Awed, Vilar nodded hesitantly. With a sweeping gesture of his hand, Theodore Hadley Carpenter indicated six almost identical younger men sitting to his right.

"My sons," he said.

Further down the table were still younger men—this was the generation of Melbourne Hadley Carpenter, Vilar decided. "My grandsons," the patriarch said, confirming this.

"You have a very fine family, Mr. Carpenter," Vilar said.

"One of the best, sir," Carpenter replied blandly. "Will you join us now for breakfast? We can talk afterward."

Vilar had no objections, and took a vacant seat at the table. Breakfast proceeded—served, he noted, by pretty young girls who were probably Carpenter's



Why hadn't he chosen an alien-looking world?

granddaughters. There were no outsiders on this planet, no servants, no one who was not part of a Family.

Except me, he thought with wry amusement. Always the outsider.

BREAKFAST had been as efficiently Terraformed as the planet itself. Bacon and eggs, warm rolls, coffee—why, it was ludicrous to travel—what was it, five hundred forty-five light years, untold trillions of miles?—and have warm rolls and coffee for breakfast. But people tend to cling, Vilar thought. What was the entire Terraforming project but a mighty whimper, a

galaxy-shaking yawp of puny defiance (*barbaric* yawp, his poet's mind footnoted automatically)? Man was progressively carving the worlds of space into the image of Earth, and eating rolls for breakfast.

Vilar considered the thought. Later, he knew, it would emerge concealed in the webwork of one of his poems; still later he would see it there, and destroy the poem as a silly, timebound polemic.

He sat back in his chair when he had finished eating. The table was cleared. Then, to his astonishment, old Carpenter clapped his hands and one of his look-alike sons fetched a musical instrument.

It was stringed, the strings stretched tight over a graven sounding-board. A *dulcimer*, Vilar thought in wonderment as the patriarch began to play, striking the strings with two carved ivory sticks.

The melody was a strange and complex one; the poet, who had a sound but far from detailed knowledge of musical theory, listened carefully. The short piece ended plaintively in the minor, coming to an abrupt halt with three descending thirds.

"My own composition," the old man said, in the silence that followed. "It's sometimes hard to get used to our music at first, but—"

"I thought it was fine," Vilar said shortly. He was anxious to finish this meal and return to work, and hoped there would be no further talk or performing.

He rose from his chair.

"Leaving so soon?" the old man asked. "Why, we haven't even talked."

"Talked? About what?"

CARPENTER knotted his fingers together. "About your contribution to our group, of course. We can't happily let you stay with us and eat our food if you're not going to offer us anything, stranger. Come now—what do you do?"

"I'm a poet," Vilar said uneasily.

The old man chuckled. "A poet? Indeed, yes—but what do you *do*?"

"I don't understand you. If you mean, what is my trade, I have none. I'm merely a poet."

"Grandfather means, can you do anything else," whispered one of the younger Carpenters near him. "Of course you're a poet—who ever said you wouldn't be?"

Vilar shook his head. "Nothing but a poet." It sounded like an indictment, self-spoken.

"We had hoped you were a medical man, or a bookbinder, or perhaps a blacksmith. Coming from Earth, as you were—who would have expected a *poet*? Why, we have poets aplenty here! Of all things for Earth to give us!"

Emil Vilar moistened his lips and fidgeted nervously. "I'm sorry to disappoint you," he said weakly, turning up the palms of his hands. "Terribly sorry."

THE JOKE was on them, he thought later that morning. No wonder they had been so anxious to have him come. To them, Earth meant something rugged and harsh, strange and jagged. They had hoped to have the smooth rhythm of their life disrupted by the man from Earth.



Yes, the joke's on them, he decided. Instead of a blacksmith, they got Earth's last poet—her one and only poet. And Rigel Seven had plenty of those.

Emil Vilar looked up from his seat in the arboretum outside of the domed house. One of the tall grandsons—was it Melbourne Hadley Carpenter, or Theodore Hadley III, or one of the others?—stood near him.

"Grandfather would like to know if you would come inside now, Emil Vilar. He would like to see you alone."

"Very well," Vilar said. He rose and followed the tall young man inside, and up the stairs to a richly panelled room in which sat the eldest of the Carpenter clan.

"Come in, please," the old man said gently.

Vilar took the seat offered him and waited tensely for old Carpenter to speak. At close range, he could see that the old man was ancient, but well preserved even at a probable age of a hundred fifty.

"You say you're a *poet*," Carpenter said, hitting the plosive sound fiercely. "Would you mind reading this, and giving me your honest opinion of it?"

VILAR TOOK the proffered sheet of paper, as he had taken so many other amateur poetic attempts back on Earth, and read the poem very carefully. It was a villanelle, smoothly accomplished, except for a slip in scansion in the third line of the quatrain. It was also shallow and completely lacking in poetic vision; for once, Vilar determined to be absolutely unsparing in his criticism.

"A pretty exercise," he said casually. "Neatly handled, except for this blunder in the next line to last." He indicated the blemish, and added, "Other than that, the work's totally devoid of value. It doesn't even have the virtue of being entertaining; its emptiness is merely offensive. Have I made myself clear?"

"You have," Carpenter said.

stiffly. "The verses were mine."

"You asked for honest criticism," Vilar reminded him.

"So I did—and I received it, perhaps. What of those paintings on the wall?"

They were abstracts, strikingly handled. "I'm not a painter, you realize," Vilar said haltingly. "But I'd say they were excellent—quite good, certainly."

"Those are mine too," Carpenter said.

Vilar blinked surprisedly. "You're very versatile, Mr. Carpenter. Musician, composer, poet, painter—you hold all the arts at your command."

"Ah—yes," Carpenter said, somewhat testily. "It is not at all unusual here. In fact, it's customary. We pride ourselves on our artistic ability. We are *all* poets, Mr. Vilar. We all paint, we all play instruments, we all compose."

"Whereas I'm limited to my one paltry art, is that it? I'm merely a poet."

A SUDDEN feeling of inferiority swept over him for the first time within his memory. He had felt humble before—humble before Milton or Aeschylus, before Yeats or Shakespeare, as he struggled to surpass their accomplishments. But there was a shade of difference between humility and

inferiority. What he felt now was inadequacy, not merely as a poet, but as a person. For a man as self-assured as Vilar, it was a painful thing.

He looked up at old Carpenter: "Will you excuse me?" he said, his voice strangely harsh and edgy.

ALONE, in his shack, he stared at the sheet of paper, regretfully, and read the lines he had written:

Slippery shadows of daylight stand

Between each man and himself; each cries out,

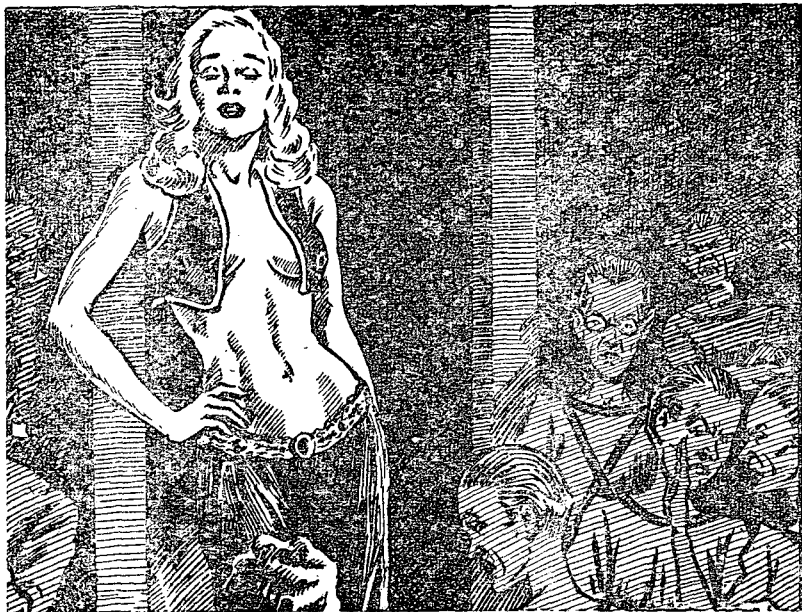
But—

That was where they ended. He had just composed them—or so he had thought, at the moment. Now, five minutes later, he recognized them for what they were: lines from a poem he had composed in his youth and rightfully burned for the adolescent twaddle it was.

Where was his technique, his vaunted vowel sense, his intricate rhythms and subtle verbal conflicts? He looked sadly at the clumsy nonsense his fear-numbed brain had dictated, and swept the sheet contemptuously to the floor.

Have I lost the gift?

It was a cold, soul-withering



Vilar felt that they all disapproved of him.

question, but it was followed hastily by another even more deadly: *Did I ever have the gift?*

But that was an easily-answered question. There was the slim blue-bound volume, right over here—

The book was gone.

He stared at the quarter inch left vacant in the bookcase for a moment. The book had been taken. One of the Carpenters was evidently curious about his poetry.

Well, never mind, he thought. I still carry the poems with me.

To prove it, he recited *The Apples of Idun*, one of the

longest, and, to his mind, the best. When he was finished, his old confidence had returned; his gift had been no illusion.

But neither was the Carpenter family. And he could no longer stay here in their presence.

DEJECTEDLY, he recalled the performance of the patriarch: with astonishing versatility, the old man flitted from one art form to the next—as did the others. There wasn't a man in the family who couldn't turn a verse, set his own song to music, perform the piece on one of a dozen instruments, and render a nonobjec-

tive interpretation of it in oils to boot. Beside formidable talent of this sort, Vilar felt his own paltry gift fade into insignificance. Art was as natural to these people as breathing. They had been *bred* to it; no one wore the label "artist" on Rigel Seven, no specialist lurked in his private nook or category.

And Emil Vilar was aware that there was no place for him in a world of this sort. His talent was too ephemeral to survive among these genial philistines—for philistines they were, despite or perhaps because of their great range of abilities.

They were omniartistic—and omnivorous, too; they would devour Emil Vilar.

He took his suitcase from the closet and calmly began to pack. Returning to Earth was out of the question, but he would go somewhere, somewhere where life was more complex and art a more highly valued skill.

"Why are you packing?" a resonant voice asked.

Vilar whirled. It was old Carpenter, standing in the doorway.

"I've decided to go. That's reason enough."

Carpenter smiled pleasantly. "Go? Where could you go? Back to Earth?"

"No—but anywhere away from here."

"You'll find the other fifteen Families much the same," the old man said. "Take my advice; stay here. We like you, Vilar. We don't want to lose you so soon."

VILAR WAS silent and motionless for a while. Then, without saying a word, he resumed packing.

Carpenter crossed the cabin quickly and put his hand on Vilar's arm. The old man's grip was surprisingly strong. "Please," he said urgently. "Don't go."

Vilar loosened the grip and stepped away. "I can't stay here. I have to leave."

"But why?"

"*Because you're driving me crazy, dammit!*" Vilar shouted suddenly. It was the first time he had lost his temper in more than thirty years.

Quivering, he turned toward the older man. "You paint, you sing, you write, you compose. You do everything! And what of me? I'm a poet, nothing more. A *mere* poet. In this world, that's like being a man with only one arm—someone to be pitied."

"But—"

"Let me finish," Vilar said. A new thought had struck him, and he wanted to get it out. "Let me pass this information



along to you: you're not artists, any one of you. You're artists-manque, would-be artists, not-quite artists.

"Art's an ennobling thing—a gift, a talent. If everyone's got it, it's no talent. When gold lines the street, it's worth no more than dross. And so you people who are so proud of yourselves for many talents—why, you have none at all!"

CARPENTER seemed to ignore Vilar's tirade. "Is that why you're leaving?"

"I'm—I'm—" Vilar paused, confused. "I'm leaving because I want to leave. Because I'm a real artist, and I *know* I am. I don't want to be polluted by the pretended art I see here. I have something real and wonderful, and I don't want to lose it. And I *will* lose it here."

"How wrong you are," Carpenter said. "In just that last, I mean. You do have a gift—and we need it; we want you to stay. Will you?"

"But you said this morning that I couldn't stay, not unless I brought something new to this place. And I haven't. What good is one more poet, in a town full of them? Even," he added belligerently, "if that poet's worth all the rest in one?"

"You misunderstand," Carpenter said. "True, we need no more poets. But we need you. Vilar, *we need an audience!*"

Suddenly, Emil Vilar understood. The joke was on him after all. They needed him, all right: what kind of army was it that had a thousand generals and no foot-soldiers?

He started to laugh, slowly at first, then a violent upheaving gasp that brought tears to his eyes. After nearly a minute, he grew silent again. "I see," he said softly. "Very well, then. I'll be your audience."

It was ideal, after all. So far as they were concerned, he had but a single talent: that of being an audience. Privately, he knew he was a poet, not an audience. But one had to pay a price in services rendered, in order to be a poet for one's self alone.

HE SAW how the days to come would be. His value to them would be as a non-painter, a non-composer, an onlooker and critic. His pri-

vate poetic endeavors would seem beneath contempt to them—which was as he wanted it. Alone in the midst of a crowd, he could work out his artistic destiny on this strange and familiar planet without fear of watchers. The Carpenters longed for spectators; Vilar had long since outgrown the need for them.

"By the way," the old man said, smiling guiltily. "While you were in the park this morning, I took the liberty of borrowing *this*." He reached inside his jacket and drew forth Vilar's collected poems.

"Oh? What did you think of them?" Vilar asked.

The patriarch frowned, fidgeted, coughed. "Ah—"

"An honest opinion," Vilar said. "As I gave this morning."

"Well, to be frank—two of my sons looked at them with me. And none of us could see any meaning or value in the lot of them, Vilar. I don't know where you got the idea you had any talent for poetry. You really don't, you know."

"I've often suspected that myself," Vilar said happily. He took the book and fondled it with satisfaction. Already, he was envisioning a second volume—a volume that would appear in an edition of one, for his eyes alone.

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We had to use the man sticks on them.

BINGO and BONGO

by Carol Emshwiller

illustrated by EMSH

Provoking as they may be at times,
we still adhere to the old cliché:
"Be kind to your two-footed
friends!"

I—WE LIKE men. I—we
like little things, fatherly-
motherly, especially since I
and we all became as one.
Male or female men, it doesn't
matter to me; but I do like
them.

Some think they're too inde-
pendent, don't really return

affection and all that, but I think it's just the way they're trained that makes the difference. I-we never had any trouble that way, but then I and we all try to give them a good home with plenty of discipline.

I and we all lost one just five revolutions past, come red sun. The little ones felt the loss deeply. They were ruffled and muffled, little Toto even more than Ruba.

The man got caught in a riser outside rising up to the top. How he got there, or why, I'll never figure out.

Toto says he was trying to escape. I-we heard him say that. But we gave the man such a nice home, and he seemed to like it, too. The question is, why would he be caught on the up riser if he were trying to get away?

Anyway, no man could ever get over the outside wall all by himself, even though they are light and can jump so on our world. That doesn't answer the question.

Well, I-we know Toto is just a young Dooly still and he has a lot to learn. They say that curiosity killed the man, and I imagine that was the reason why.

POOOR LITTLE Scoots, he didn't look too badly off when I and we all took him out from the riser, but he

must have been hurt inside. We never did find out because I didn't want to take him to be fixed. It might have cost all of twenty, and that's really too much to spend on a man.

Anyway, I promised the little ones that as soon as a new ship came in, they should have another, so when they sent the Lately by and I saw that ship did come, I sent Essi right away.

I told her to look for good points. Just because it's for the little ones is no sign it shouldn't be a good man. I might like to compare again.

Essi went down and got a very nice man. A black haired female, wide across the eyes, small and good to compare, and Ruba and Toto weren't ruffled and muffed any more.

"Ruba, Toto, isn't she a nice man? Don't jangle and jog so, Toto dear. See how she does. She's frightened. Now be still...Toto, you're too rough. You must go out now. Mother-Father-Aunt say go out. If you go quickly you can name the man all by yourself. Go out now and think up names."

We'll be sorry. You know the sorts of names he picks. We can use something else when we compare her. All the same, I don't like the idea, and you

shouldn't have spoken without us thinking.

Oh, let the little one have some fun.

"Ruba, you pet the nice man and give her some mash. She hasn't had anything to eat but hard cakes all the long trip."

But Ruba said she didn't want to. "The man is dirty," she said, "and she smells bad."

"We'll get Essi to clean her up," I said. "They don't look after them much on the trip."

ESSI CAME, and I and we all, and Ruba went out and there was Toto and he had a name all picked out.

I told you so.

You'll have to talk him out of it, if you can.

Oh, it's not so bad, and I'll call her something nice when we compare her.

Bingo it is, then.

Then Ussi came from next door mound and she had a man box under her first elbow. "We heard the little ones wanted a man," she said, "but of course they wouldn't want this one."

"We do. We do," Ruba and Toto said. "One for Toto and one for Ruba. It's only fair."

And I-we all said, "No," and "No."

"We have to get rid of him," Ussi said. "We didn't know you had one, but we knew you used to want one. I'll take him away to the place,"

she said. "It's a shame, but nobody wants him."

RUBA AND Toto said, "No, no. We *do* want him, and don't take him to the place." *You're too soft hearted.*

So are you.

What will we do with two?

Well, I hate to see a good man done away with.

"All right. All right. Mother-Father-Aunt say, yes. And it's Ruba's turn to name one now."

And that's how we came to have Bingo and Bongo.

I hope they get along together. Let's try and see.

We opened the man box Ussi had brought and took Bongo out. He was big, for a man, a handsome creature with brown, tangled mane and brownish skin. He kept his head down, but he looked at us all in a curious way.

It looks like trouble. Do you think so? You're a good trainer.

Anyway, it's too soon to tell.

THEN I-WE put Bongo in the man box with Bingo and watched to see if they would get along together.

The first thing that happened was that Bongo made some loud sounds at Bingo. And then Bingo made a sound and then it was started and

they both went jibber-jabber the way men always do. And there was th-ing and ll-ing and rr-ing. I don't know how they make such sounds, or why.

Then, Bingo made a sniffy sound; she wiped her face with a bottom corner of the old wrap that Essi gave her, and that she had wound about her under her two single arms. Bongo looked more gentle then, and touched her shoulder. But she went away from him and stopped her sniffing.

Then Bongo did the odd thing. He took a large piece of of old Lately that was on the bottom of the box and stood it up on end. He tied it with a piece of cloth stuff and it made two parts to the little man box. And all his things he put on one side and all Bingo's on the other, where Bingo was.

Bingo seems nice and gentle.

Let's pet her.

Yes, with arm mouths, and outer ear tips.

Yes, let's.

"Come, little Bingo. Come come."

RIGHT AWAY, first thing next rotation, the young ones said they wanted to go to the man box place and play, and I said, "Yes, only be careful and take the man sticks." *Well, there have been stories. Oh, what can little men do?*

"And call if you need me-us."

So they went to play and took man sticks. And after a while, - there was a girating sound and the clack, clack, clack of man sticks. I went fast to see what it all was.

It was Bongo, only when I got there, he was lying down and tired from the man sticks. First it was Bingo, though. Little Toto had stepped on her by mistake and the poor darling was so unsettled he dropped the man stick. Bongo jumped wide and fast, the way the little men can jump on our world; he got it and went clack at Toto—only then, Ruba had hers.

"I did it," she said. "I went clack, clack. Did you hear me?"

"Yes, darling. You did just the right thing. Only next time try not to do it at the head part." Then I and we all said, "Father-Mother-Aunt say go. See, Bongo is tired from the man stick. See how he sits and breathes hard. Go now and let him rest," and they went.

I LOOKED to see how Bingo was. Toto had stepped on both her legs and they were bruised but not broken.

Poor little Toto. He has the foot of a growing one.

Yes, he can't help it.

Bingo will have to learn to keep out of the way.

We let the men rest some then, and Essi looked after them as if they were little Doolies.

She came to me one time and said, "Bongo is so smart."

And I—we said, "How?"

"Well, he's only been here since red sun and already he can say stop, and food, and sleep. I heard him."

"Are you sure?" I asked.

"It's hard to understand, but it sounds like it, and they come at the right times. I *think* he says them."

Some say men do learn to say a little.

Tales, tales.

I wouldn't believe it even if it were true.

"You've been listening to those at the ships again, Essi."

"Well, last time they said men had mounds and things on their own world; and lanes and towers and engines..."

"Essi, you go on and on. I—we never said they didn't. It's instinct that makes them build like that. Busy, busy, all the time; you know how they are. But talking and words, that's different. That takes real thought."

"I think you *try* to believe such things, Essi. After this *try not* to. Make an effort, now, and you'll be much better off."

RED SUN went and yellow sun came, and everyone felt it and wanted to jump and wiggle in the good feeling of it. Everyone but the little men. They don't feel such things like we do. Then Toto came. "Goto has a man," he said, "and he is going to win the secret fights with him."

I said, "No and no. I—we won't let *you* go."

And he said, "Bongo could win." And I said, "No," again.

"We could practice on the roof," he said, "and Bongo is strong. He could win better than Goto's. No one would find out. Toto wants to, and it's yellow sun."

"What if the SPCM found out? But Toto wants to and it is yellow sun. But we always give the men such a good home. Just this once, though. You're both so soft hearted, what can a one do?"

"All right, Toto, Mother-Father-Aunt say, yes, and yes, but be careful."

Toto did it all by himself. Up on the roof in yellow sun with a man stick he worked and worked Bongo. Bongo didn't like it, but I—we made him well trained and so he did it all.

I took Bingo up too, sometimes, because compare time was coming after moon time came and yellow sun was good for her to give her more color.

THEN ONE day there was a girating sound again from Toto and I went to him fast.

"Poor Toto. You must be careful and not drop Bongo. Let's see if he's hurt. How still he lies, just like little Scoots did. Take him down gently to Essis."

Essi said that such a thing often happened if men were slammed by a compartment, or stepped on badly, or dropped, like now, they would seem to be stopped like this only then sometimes up again all right.

We rested Bongo two times before Toto took him to the roof again with the man stick.

I was getting Bingo ready for comparing. I only let Ruba play with her a little bit because men do so much better if they look fresh and lively, and all that play makes them tired and sometimes black and blue.

Then came the time for the secret fights. Toto got a man-carrying box that looked like a wrap holder and went off to the secret place.

I WAS worried, and we all worried; only then, after a time Toto came back and it was all right. No one had found out about it.

"We had to use a lot of stick," Toto said, "to make them go. They wanted to jibber-jabber the way they do,

but we made them fight. There was one there with many scars and he wanted to jabber the most. Even the sticks didn't stop him though his breath came hard."

"And Bongo—did he win?"

"Naturally, but some don't think so. Goto says his did, but it isn't true."

"Of course our Bongo won," I said, and then I took him out of the box. While I cleaned the red off, I saw that his hand was closed tightly on something, and he wouldn't open it.

*Bongo still needs training.
Get the man stick.*

I-WE MADE him open his hand and it was just a tiny piece of old Lately with marks on it. It was like marks of the wet place and the forest; and then the mounds just as they are. I could tell what each thing was and which was our mound. And in the forest where nothing is at all, there was a mark.

"See," Essi said, "Bongo is so smart to make a thing like this."

"Bongo never made this," I said, "He got it at the man fights. Take it and throw it away."

Essi didn't say anything, but she took it and went out.

Could a man make such a thing? It seems more than in-



stinct. If a man made it then we're wrong to have such pets. But we do have them as pets, so a man couldn't make it. Yes, you're right. We wouldn't have such pets and so we don't.

Yellow sun went down and red sun was not yet come back and there was only moon.

We were sad and tired in the pale light. Toto and Ruba slept; Essi did her work, but not as usual—only just enough. I and we all just sat in the middle place and dozed, and felt sad about all the world.

THEN, ONE time when two were asleep and one was awake, I heard a noise from the man box place. I woke all the way up then, and went to see what it was, but I was still slow. When I got to the man box, everything looked right. I went to the top and looked in at Bongo's side but there was no one side anymore because the Lately that separated the two sides was gone.

It can't be.

See, in the corner—tied up pieces of cloth hung down.

*They climbed out on it.
Run, now. I hear the riser.
Oh, not Bingo. I must compare her, and the time is so near.
Faster! Don't hang back.
I can't. It's moon time.
Try.*

I CAME TO the riser, and Bingo and Bongo were on it hanging tight to each other and to something big. It was the piece of Lately from the man cage only there were more parts to it. I stopped then and made no noise because it was dangerous for them to stand on the thin flanges and go up like that, and if I made a noise they might fall in like little Scoots did.

Later they were safe above, I went up fast; when I got there it was all so strange in the moonlight that I stopped to wonder. Bingo and Bongo had no wraps on at all, though moontime is cold and men have only skin. They shook because of cold, and Bingo held herself with her arms across her middle. The wraps were all in long thin pieces tied together and tied to the Lately. And the strangest of all was the Lately that had cross pieces on it now and was up in the air above their heads, blowing in the wind. And just while I stopped and looked, up

went Bingo too, on the long wrap piece.

THEN I and we all moved fast, even for moontime. Where Bongo started up I caught him.

Squeeze, crush. Don't let him go.

Ah, he's slippery.

Man teeth, they bite.

He hurt you.

Yes, an eye. It squeezes out. It's bit.

He's free.

Let him go then. He's up now. Look, he has the Lately piece from the fights. They'll go to that mark in the forest, now.

It's from Essi. She's a bad one.

It's because she thinks that the men are so smart.

We'll teach her what to think now.

They're over the wall.

And now they drop off. They'll be hurt.

No. Men are so little and light they can fall a long ways.

Run. We can get them outside.

But men take great leaps even in moon time.

Are they lost then?

I fear.

The mound won't be the same without my Bingo.

We'll get another man.

Yes, don't worry. There are plenty more where they came from.



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DOWN TO EARTH

A Department of Letters and Comment

Dear Bob:

In your blurb for "Each An Explorer", you discuss my early efforts, with the opening phrase: "Legend has it..." Well, as long as I'm alive, why confine yourself to legend? Here are the facts of the case:

I submitted my first eight stories to Campbell and got rejected. He took my ninth story, "Trends". He then rejected my next nine stories and took my nineteenth, "Homo Sol". After one or two more rejections (here I lose count), he took my first two positronic robots stories, "Reason" and "Liar!", and immediately afterward took "Nightfall"; and after that, I sold everything I wrote, though not always to the first market to which it was submitted.

Of the approximately twenty stories which were rejected by Campbell in my first two years as a writer, I sold about half elsewhere, including the second and third stories I ever wrote. "Marooned Off Vesta" appeared in *Amazing Stories* before "Trends" appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction*.

Of the ten stories which I never sold anywhere, all have been destroyed. I no longer have them and I'm glad of it. They were pretty damn horrible.

—ISAAC ASIMOV

As is often the case, the true facts turn out to be more interesting and impressive than the legend. Is there any truth to the rumor that *Amazing* will present a photostatic print, page by page, of the original manuscript of "Marooned Off Vesta", plus a life-size fold-in color photo of you in their March 1959 issue—the 20th anniversary of your first appearance in print?

Dear RWL:

Two things impelled me to write: First, the very welcome news that *Fuore Science Fiction* is returning to regular publication; second, the excellence of Issue Number 30, which is one reason why the news is so welcome.

No story in Number 30 struck me as being less than good, and "good" is the word for the two lesser offerings: "Venus Trap" and "The Fourth Invasion". For the rest, I think Pohl's "Day of the Boomer Dukes" is

the kind of story you can point to when you want to talk about the best in science fiction being comparable to worthwhile fiction in mainstream literature. Much the same can be said of Russell's "Heav'n, Heav'n". Asimov is unique, as always, with his flair for presenting either a brand-new idea, or such a novel change on a familiar theme that it seems new. His stories still have the freshness and flair of a new writer, without the awkwardnesses of the neophyte. You made this same point in different words, in your blurb. Coppel's "The Hills of Home" is a very moving work, but a bit more specialized: Obviously it has more meaning to someone who has read the Burroughs "Mars" novels, which I haven't. Still, the feeling came across to me, and that's what counts.

Garrett's story was thought-provoking and "New Arcadia" is the most enjoyable bit of fiction I've seen from L. Sprague de Camp for quite a time—particularly in the novelet or short story lengths. It had the inimitable de Camp gusto, which I've missed for much too long, although there are traces of it in his articles for sure. Would that you could run long novels serially; somehow I feel that Sprague must have a long novel heretofore unpublished because it didn't fit the philosophical "party lines" of the existing monthly science fiction magazines, and was too long for the others—yours included, as of the present bi-monthly schedules. Go monthly, please; I don't care which of the titles is selected for the honor, so long as you can give us one monthly magazine. *With serials!*

I hope the letter department is restored, and that you haven't dropped it completely in *Science Fiction Stories*.

JAY TYLER

The letter department hasn't been dropped; it was crowded out of two successive issues of *Science Fiction Stories*, but you'll see it back in the March 1957 issue.

One crucial requirement in any literary work is that the essential feeling comes across, even if a given reader is not familiar with important background details.

Worlds Without End

(Continued From
Page 63)

we're giving it away. Do you understand that *We're giving it away*. Within the next few days, we plan to make all our data available to a commission we'll ask to be set up. Its membership will be chosen from the various unions, to assess the data and decide where use may best be made of it."

"Blaine. Wait a minute, Blaine."

Roemer reached out for the phone. "Let me finish it; you're beat out. Take it easy now. I will handle it."

He lifted the receiver, smiling. "They'll want your authority, and all the rest of it."

He smiled again. "This was what Gieser wanted, Blaine. That's why Farris made him fire me; that's why Farris killed him..."

ROEMER spoke into the phone. "Hello, sir. Blaine had to leave; I'll fill in the rest..."

The rest? There wasn't any more. Couldn't they understand? He'd made it very simple.

Dreams was giving up its one last chance at greatness. It was all Dreams had, and Norman Blaine had given it away. He had beaten Harriet and Farris and the hunting goons, but it was a bitter, empty victory.

It saved the pride of Dreams; and that was all it saved.

Something—some thought, some impulse, made him lift his head, almost as if someone had called to him from across the room.

Lucinda stood beside the door, looking at him, with a gentle smile upon her mud-streaked face, and her eyes were deep and soft. "Can't you hear them cheering?" she asked. "Can't you hear the whole world cheering you? It's been a long time, Norman Blaine, since the whole world cheered together!"



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Editorial



What Works?

OFFHAND, you would think that all the layman needed, in reference to a new machine, device, dingus or process, etc., was a simple "yes" or "no" answer to the question: "Does it work?" Does this contraption perform the operation claimed for it when it is constructed according to specifications, and is operated in the manner prescribed? Does this process bring forth the results claimed for it, when it is applied according to the directives given?

Well, there are exceptions—and one example is the so-called (modified) Hieronymous machine about which John W. Campbell lectured, and which he brought for demonstration, at the 14th World Science Fiction Convention, last September. *It*, Campbell is reported to have

said on other occasions, *doesn't work—but perhaps you do*. "You," in this case, means "machine plus operator".

The general idea is that this may be a "psionic" device, one, that is, which requires not only some sort of motivating power with which we are familiar in industry but also, in some manner yet to be explained (if it occurs), picks up some sort of motivating power from the person using the dingus. Or it might be entirely a matter of human motivation. For lack of a better and more specific term, this power (if any) we are more or less agreed to call "psionic power". Let's lay consideration of "meanings" for this term on the table—postpone discussion of it, that is—for the nonce.

The device consists of a plate which feels very much

like a formica surface to my fingertips and a dial, on the outside of a rectangular enclosure. There's what I'm told is a standard sample of metal wired to all this in some manner. Within, affixed to the bottom, is a neatly drawn diagram which looks to my innocence like some sort of schematic, such as one finds in electronic publications. (I bow to none when it comes to sheer innocence in such matters, so will not argue that point.) The dial is rather finely graduated; to operate the device, one turns the dial slowly with one hand—starting at zero—and strokes the plate with the fingertips at the other.

What is supposed to happen? Well, at certain spots on the dial—around 20 is an important one—the texture of the plate should feel somewhat different. Perhaps sticky, perhaps fuzzy, perhaps slippery—perhaps something else, but in any event—some got general impressions. The number "20" has been noted because, it is averred, a large percentage of those who got reactions at all obtained them at this point. Some, reports go, got no reactions whatsoever; some got distinct reactions at specific points (such as 20); some got general impressions along the line, but nothing outstanding at any given point—what is called the "random reaction".

So, on the morning of September 3d, 1956, I accompanied Thomas N. Scortia and Randall Garrett to Mr. Campbell's suite at the Biltmore and beheld both the modified and the earlier model of the so-called Hieronymous machine. The earlier one had wires and tubes inside; the modified version had only the schematic affixed to the bottom.

To my innocence, the modified version looks far more impressive; tubes and wires, etc., are such conventional affairs.

I WIPE my hands to make sure that there wasn't already some moisture on them, which might account for a slippery feeling, touched some metallic object—it was a hotel fixture—to discharge any static electricity I might have accumulated (one must be scientific, you know) and with a perfect willingness to feel anything that came along (but without the *intent* to feel anything, or anything in particular) commenced to turn the dial slowly with my left hand, gently stroking the plate with the fingertips of my right. I did not watch the dial. After a time, I felt what I can only describe as a very mild electric tingling in my fingertips. This neither increased nor diminished, and I realized in horror that I hadn't noticed exactly where

the dial was when this set in.

Then I tried it again, stroking the plate with the fingertips of my left hand and turning the dial with my right. No response whatsoever. After awhile, I tried again with the right hand; at the beginning, the plate felt smooth, as it had at first. I watched the dial, this time; and the tingling set in just around "20", again continuing all the way through. "Random response", was the verdict.

A third trial, about half an hour later, brought exactly the same results.

Scortia asked me if I believed it. Yes, I told him, I

believe that I felt a certain type of sensation—but that is all I'm ready to believe at the moment. *I do not necessarily believe any particular explanation of why I felt the sensations described.* Tom added to that the observation that he could accept as much—in respect to the first trial; afterwards, there might have been subconscious urges to repeat. But the first was decidedly unrehearsed; no one had told me about feeling mild electric tingles when they performed a finger job on the plate.

Garrett reported high-level orthodox response: he got strong sensations at the three points where the majority of those who had gotten any re-

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action at all had received sensations. Doc Smith reported that, so far as he was concerned, it worked.

At this point, I ask *what worked?*

Sprague de Camp's retort that it takes a lot of imagination to get imaginary results from an imaginary machine is quite relevant here, as is Bob Bloch's classic observation that there's nothing at all to telepathy; it's all in your mind.

My present contention, subject to alteration upon more solid evidence, is that this trial told me nothing about "it", about the machine. The experience may, however, reveal some interesting data about me.

However, I'll certainly endorse Campbell's general approach to the whole question: "Here's something that we don't know much of anything—for all practical purposes, nothing—about. I think

there's something in it; I'm going to work at it and see what comes up, if anything. I'm having fun doing this, and I'm not going to waste time and energy defending my postulates. Anyone who wants to join in is welcome!"

Fair enough, even though I think I'll sit this one out. But I can go along on the proposition that here is a field for science fictionists to speculate about and experiment with. Unlike some other fields that fans and readers have been invited into, there's nothing here that has been established as being deadly or even dangerous, so far as I've heard. You start with postulates, and if they prove to be useful, fine; if not, forget them and try some others.

It isn't at all difficult to think of more dubious hobbies.



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